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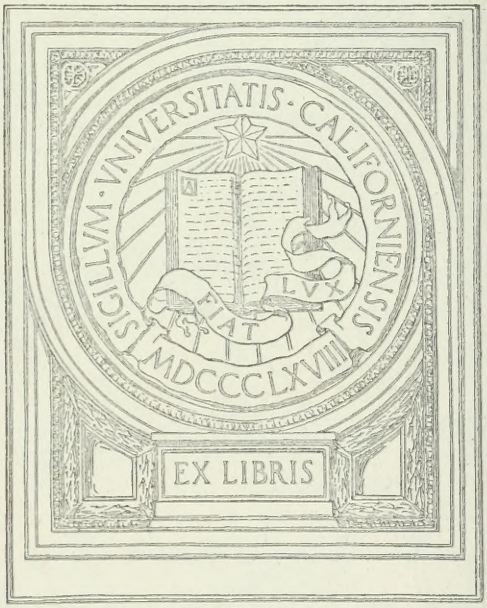

THE MIDDLE AGE.

HISTORY

OF

WESLEYAN METHODISM.

VOL. II.

THE MIDDLE AGE.

BY GEORGE SMITH, LL.D., F.A.S.,

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY,
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TO

THE REVEREND FRANCIS A. WEST,

PRESIDENT OF THE WESLEYAN CONFERENCE, 1857—8,

THIS SECOND VOLUME OF

THE HISTORY OF WESLEYAN METHODISM

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

Inscribed,

AS A PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF RESPECT

FOR THE HIGH OFFICE WHICH HE SO HONOURABLY HOLDS,

AND OF SINCERE APPRECIATION OF THE

TALENTS AND VIRTUES

DISPLAYED IN HIS

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CHARACTER;

BY

THE AUTHOR.

426204

PREFACE.

In presenting the second volume of the "History of Methodism" to the Connexion and the public, the Author does not feel called on to introduce it with any lengthened address. He is grateful for the flattering manner in which the first volume was received, and humbly hopes that this will be no less favoured.

He deeply regrets having had to investigate the troubles and collisions which followed the death of Wesley: they were a part of the subject which could not be avoided, and he has not shrunk from his duty. In dealing with this difficult portion of his task, he has prosecuted the inquiry in all candour and honesty. He is conscious that he has not "set down aught in malice;" and if any sentiment, or form of expression, in these pages, is calculated to wound the feelings of any surviving friends of the pious dead, he will most sincerely regret it. But, whilst exercising every care of this sort, the Author felt bound to present a full exhibition of this part of Methodist history, and to give his judgment on it without reserve.

Of the work generally he has little to say. In the narrative part, he has selected those facts which he thought adapted to show the working of the system; and he has paid special attention to those circumstances which stand more particularly connected with the public character, action, and progress of the body.

In acknowledging the kindness of his friends, he may

observe, that the ministers and gentlemen named in the Preface to the former volume have continued their very efficient aid, for which he begs them again to accept his best thanks. To that list he must now add the names of the Rev. F. A. West, President of the Conference, and the Rev. George Taylor, of Leeds; to whom his grateful acknowledgments are also made for their valuable assistance. He feels bound, however, to tender specially his thanks to the Rev. James H. Rigg, of Stockport, for the loan of a great number of valuable printed and MS. documents, of the most essential importance to this portion of the History; and also to Dr. Sandwith, of Hull, for a similar loan.

To prevent any misconception, the Author feels bound to add, that he has invariably acted on his own judgment in the use of all materials, and in regard to the suggestions of his friends. The work is, therefore, as was said of the first volume, entirely his own; and no one else is responsible for a single sentiment or statement contained in it. It exhibits a continuance of his efforts to elucidate the History of Wesleyan Methodism, by presenting what is intended to be "a brief but full, a friendly but faithful, narrative" of its progress during "the Middle Age" of its existence.

The promise of a second volume, at the close of the Preface of the first, was read by some parties as containing an intimation that with it the Author intended to close his labours on the subject. That was never his intention, although, with the great uncertainty of health and life before him, he did not feel at liberty in his intimation to go beyond what he was likely to accomplish in one year. He intended, should it please Providence to spare him, to close the work in three volumes,

bringing down the History to some not very remote period, so that the third volume may present a view of the Wesleyan Methodism of modern times. The concluding portion will be prepared with all convenient despatch, although it is feared it may take longer time in its compilation than has been required for the present volume.

TREVU, CAMBORNE,
May 27th, 1858.

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HISTORY

OF

WESLEYAN METHODISM.

BOOK IV.

THE DEVELOPEMENT AND CONSOLIDATION OF WESLEYAN METHODIST POLITY.

INTRODUCTION.

METHODISM during Wesley's Life—Necessity for Change in the System after his Death—Further Causes of Developement—These rendered more potent by the Character of the Societies—The Principle of Methodist Developement arose out of the Operation of a divine Purpose—No systematic Action taken to establish an improved Polity—The Result of this peculiar State of the Connexion.

OUR preceding researches have fully established the fact, that Methodism, throughout the lifetime of Wesley, mainly consisted in a series of efforts to evangelize the benighted nominal Christians of our country, and to lead them to the experience of inward godliness, and the practice of outward holiness. All that Wesley did in the way of organization, was not designed to work out any preconceived plan, or to establish any particular system, but to save souls from the guilt and power of sin, and to train them up for heaven. Methodism during Wesley's life.

This being the case, it cannot be any cause of wonder, that his death rendered very important changes necessary. As the working out of a system was not his ruling object, Necessity for change in the system after his death.

so he seldom made arrangements beyond what successive exigencies, as they arose, required; while he continued to act as the founder, father, and ruling head of the whole body. By bequeathing to the legal Hundred the power of appointing preachers to the Methodist chapels, and leaving his dying charge with them, that they should in no way on that account assume distinction or authority over the other itinerant preachers, he undoubtedly constituted the ministers the permanent and supreme authority in Methodism. But no provision was made by him for supplying that continual and unwearied oversight which he had exercised over the Connexion from the beginning. During the later years of his life, when the increasing magnitude of the work, and his failing strength, rendered him unequal to the full exercise of this supervision, the work was done to a great extent in his name, and by his authority, through a few of the preachers in whom he had confidence. When he was removed by death, there was, therefore, not only a great and urgent want created, but a want in the highest sphere,—a want which no man in the Connexion could individually supply.

Further causes of developement.

Besides this, there were other elements in operation, which rendered progressive changes certain. Here we find a numerous body of pious and devoted men, who, while standing in the presence of Wesley, and regarding him under God as their father and their head, were content to be considered by him as lay-preachers; yet these men knew by indubitable evidence, that they were as really and truly scriptural ministers, as any men in Christendom. Methodism contained hundreds of congregations and Societies, comprising great numbers of men and women, well instructed in every Christian doctrine and duty, who walked daily in the experience of the divine favour, and in the practice of all

Christian virtue. Yet, although these Societies were clearly entitled to rank as Christian churches, and were actually in possession of every other essential of Christian communion, they were not permitted to receive, from the hands of their own preachers, those sacred ordinances which form the most striking and distinctive privilege of the Church of Christ.

These rendered more potent by the character of the Societies.

These, and other circumstances which might be named, clearly showed that Methodism was, by the death of Wesley, placed in circumstances which rendered change, or rather developement, necessary. This necessity was rendered more pressing by the spirit, acquirements, and character of the members of the Methodist Societies. These Societies were not merely combinations of serious persons who were agreed as to Christian doctrines, discipline, and modes of worship. They had not, indeed, generally studied either of these in any regular or systematic manner. They were certainly, to a great extent, of one mind as to the doctrine of universal redemption, and some other important theological opinions; but in many particulars respecting discipline, as well as the administration of the sacraments by their preachers, they were far from being united in judgment. While, however, they lacked this unity of sentiment, they were otherwise strong, united by substantial identity of Christian experience and sympathy, and by the practice of mutual Christian intercourse and communion, to an extent unknown before since the days of apostolic Christianity. As a consequence, they possessed generally the vigorous energy of spiritual life, combined with much earnestness and zeal, and with considerable ability to express their views, and advocate their opinions. Indeed, the constant practice of verbal intercommunion in their social and public religious meetings tended very greatly to cultivate and promote this

ability. It is difficult to conceive of any community which contained within itself such mighty motives to action, such living seeds of developement, as did the Methodist Societies of that day. Instinct with vital religious power, they required the removal of every restriction on their Christian progress, and the benefit of every religious privilege. And, although not schooled in ecclesiastical law, or well versed in the disputed points of church discipline, they felt the stirring of a power within, sufficient to carry them onward to the attainment of all they required. This, it must be confessed, on some occasions, led them to rash and improper action; but it was more frequently restrained by godly caution, and withheld by prudential motives; so that several years elapsed before the requisite changes were fully effected.

The principle of Methodist developement arose out of the operation of a divine purpose.

Thus much is clearly apparent to a superficial observer; but, to do justice to the subject, we must investigate more fully the principle of this developement, and trace the potent energy that urged it onward, despite continually recurring obstacles and opposition. We have before asserted, and again assert, that no rational account can be given of the continued growth of Methodism during the whole life of its founder, and of its state and extent when he was removed by death, without distinctly recognising the providential appointment of God, and the gracious results of His fostering care. But did the providential purpose of God, as regarded this work, terminate when Wesley was laid in the tomb? Was this fostering care of His gracious Spirit then withdrawn? According to innumerable declarations which we have heard issuing from high places, so it should have been. Methodism, we are told, had then done its work,—had filled up its vocation. It had "roused a slumbering Church and nation to a sense

of God and religion," and consequently ought no longer to have pursued a course of ecclesiastical irregularity, but, with all its preachers and people, to have returned to the bosom of that Church from which it had been partially separated. Confidently as this has been urged, we are bound to ask, Was this the purpose and design of the great Head of the church respecting Methodism? No man who has carefully and candidly studied the history of the Connexion during the seven years which followed the death of Wesley, will hesitate a moment in answering this question in the negative. Never, in the previous history of the body, were indications of the guiding and sustaining hand of God more apparent, or more remarkable, than at this time. We have no hesitation in saying, that the leading preachers of the day, had they been ever so strongly disposed, could no more have removed the distinctive and connexional character of Methodism, and have abolished its separate existence, than the Israelites could have returned to Egypt from the wilderness. It only requires a religious mind to consider with candour all the circumstances of the case, and it will be easy to trace in this portion of Methodist history the hand of God, overruling and directing the way of His people,—sometimes controlling the preferences of preachers, at others rebuking the prejudices of the people,—yet dominantly working, all the while, to the increased stability of the foundation, and the ultimate enlargement of the superstructure of the work.

In considering the developement of Methodism, we have therefore not merely to take into account the circumstances and character of the preachers and people, but also to recognise the operation of a divine purpose, to rear up and perpetuate a great religious agency, as an instrument of aggression on the wickedness and spiritual darkness of the

world. This was the mainspring, the motive power, of Wesleyan developement. In the absence of this, a Society might, by wisdom in counsel, and energy of action, have increased in numbers and resources; but this alone enabled the Methodist body, without unity of design, or any settled plan of polity, to exhibit a progressive developement of its church character, and a growing religious adaptation to the necessities of the world.

No systematic action taken to establish an improved polity.

We accordingly find that notwithstanding the existence of all these active elements, the death of Wesley called forth no connexional effort to frame an improved ecclesiastical polity, or to give the Methodist Societies a more complete system of church order. On the contrary, the first motion taken in relation to the sacraments was of a conservative character; while the earliest efforts made to amend the Methodist polity were principally the exertions of a junior preacher, Mr. Alexander Kilham; who, fixing on several very obvious defects in the system as it then stood, and mingling these with many fanciful and extravagant notions of his own, put himself forward, with much violence of language and manner, as an avowed Methodist Reformer.

The result of this peculiar state of the Connexion.

The result of this singular complication of circumstances produced a threefold course of action in the Connexion for several years; an outline of which is sketched in the following chapters. The first exhibits the controversies and struggles respecting the administration of the sacraments by Methodist preachers. These were terminated by the decision of the Conference of 1795, which is included in the scheme of Methodist law known as the Plan of Pacification. The second relates the conduct of Mr. Kilham, and the action of the Conference respecting it, which, after a lengthened course, ended in his expulsion from the Connexion in 1796. The

third chapter details the claims made for an amended disciplinary economy, and the decisions of the Conference respecting them. In dealing with these, the Conference had not merely to regard the intrinsic merits of the allegations made, and the requirements which were put forth: they were bound by every obligation of fidelity and honour to do this, only so far as they would be enabled, with every concession, to maintain unimpaired the integrity of the connexional principle, and the practice of ministerial itinerancy. They appear to have conceded freely and fully, although with great care and deliberation, all which they believed could thus be granted, without detriment to these fundamental institutes of Methodism. The concluding chapter of this book is devoted to an inquiry into the scriptural character of the Methodist economy, as it was found after these changes had taken place; and a defence of the claims of the Connexion thenceforth to rank as a united confederation of Christian churches.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE CONTROVERSY RESPECTING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS BY METHODIST PREACHERS, AND ITS ISSUE.

DIFFERENCE of Opinion respecting the Sacraments—These called into active Operation by the Death of Wesley—The Hull Declaration—Which is followed by other Appeals to the Connexion on both Sides—Minute of the Conference of 1791 on the Subject, variously interpreted—The Decision of the Conference of 1792 respecting the Sacraments—Salutary Results of this Decision—But it did not produce Unity of Opinion—Serious Disagreement between the Preachers and Trustees at Bristol—The Conference of 1793, and its Regulations—These not satisfactory to either Party—The Minute of 1794 respecting the Sacrament——Renewed Causes of Disquiet at Bristol—The Result of this Quarrel in the Erection of King Street Chapel—Messrs. Benson and Moore unite to devise some Means of Pacification—The Conference of 1795, and its Deliberations on the Subject in Dispute—The Plan of Pacification—Minutes of 1796—These Measures were successful, and their Operation very beneficial—Concluding Observations—The Demand for the Sacrament arose out of a religious Necessity—And did not proceed from the Preachers, but the People.

Difference of opinion respecting the sacraments

THE reader has been already informed that on the death of Wesley in 1791 great diversity of opinion existed among the Methodist people as to the administration of the sacraments by their own preachers.

This difference of opinion was the natural result of conflicting influences which for some time had been acting on the Methodist Societies. Wesley, as his conduct proved, was conscientiously attached to the Church of England, and to the end of his days regarded himself as one of her most devoted sons. As such, he availed him-

self of his position to induce his preachers and people to follow his example. It cannot, therefore, excite surprise that, on his removal by death, there were found among the Methodists strong opinions and feelings in favour of continued adhesion to the National Church. These opinions and feelings were powerfully supported by the sincere affection and reverence with which the founder of Methodism had been regarded by all his people. These influences induced most of the Methodist preachers and many in the Societies to desire the continuance of that course of action into which they had been guided by their founder. The demand, therefore, for the maintenance of the "Old Plan," as it was called, and for the avoidance of any step tending to more complete separation from the Establishment, was very earnestly and extensively urged.

On the other hand, there were powerful agencies in operation which directly tended to a different issue. By far the greater number of the Methodists of that day had been reared up in Methodist families, or gathered from the world by the ministrations of Methodist preachers. In either case, they would naturally recognise these preachers as their ministers, and feel a strong desire to receive the Christian ordinances at their hands.

Two classes of facts greatly extended and intensified this desire. Many of the clergy of that day were either openly immoral or irreligious, and thus could not be regarded by pious persons as worthy ministers of Christ; while others, professing high regard and earnest zeal for the Church, denounced the Methodists as schismatics, treated them with cruelty and scorn, and in many instances rudely repelled them from the table of the Lord.

But that which, perhaps more than anything else, gave strength to the desire for having the sacraments in Methodist chapels, was the course taken by Wesley himself in this direction, notwithstanding his sincere and strong endeavours to remain in devoted union with the Established Church. The founder of Methodism not only ordained preachers to administer the sacraments in America and Scotland,—countries where the Church of England had no jurisdiction,—but actually made a similar arrangement for England itself. The earliest historian of Methodism, who was intimately acquainted not only with the proceedings, but also with the views, of his leader, has narrated this circumstance in a manner which fully explains its object. "Mr. Wesley," he says, "had hitherto ordained ministers only for America and Scotland; but from this period, being assisted by the Rev. James Creighton and the Rev. Peard Dickenson, presbyters of the Church of England, he set apart for the sacred office, by the imposition of hands and prayer, Messrs. A. Mather, T. Rankin, and H. Moore, without sending them out of England; strongly advising them at the same time, that, according to his example, they should continue united to the Established Church, *so far as the blessed work in which they were engaged would permit.*" * Thus Wesley did distinctly make known his opinion of the paramount importance of maintaining the progress of the work of God, even at the expense of his own devoted attachment to the Establishment. He at other times, and by various acts, showed that he regarded even the most useful form, and the most approved ecclesiastical order, as of small importance, when the work of grace in the salvation of men rendered a modification of them necessary.

* MYLES's "Chronological History," p. 175.

Not only, therefore, was "baptism, as well as the burial of the dead, performed by many of the preachers long before the death of Mr. Wesley, and with his consent,"* but Mr. John Murlin, in reply to persons who had asserted that "the sacrament had never been given in England by laymen in Mr. Wesley's lifetime," says, "Mr. Wesley sent me to the city of Norwich, to a congregation who desired the sacrament; and I both baptized their children and administered the sacrament to the people part of three years; and the preachers who followed me did the same." The following gives a still more decisive account of departure from usual ecclesiastical order under the sanction of Wesley. "Before his" (Wesley's) "death, a great number of places had service in church hours, and several of them the sacrament of the Lord's Supper regularly administered to them. He ordained Mr. Woodhouse, of Owston, near Epworth, and appointed him to preach in his gown and bands, in church hours, and also to administer the sacrament, although he was only a local preacher." He also permitted "Mr. Hanby to administer the ordinances in the Circuits where he laboured," although he had not been ordained. All these facts would be generally known, with perhaps many others of a similar kind, and would unite to give encouragement and hope to such as desired the Methodist preachers to perform for their people all the offices scripturally devolving on Christian ministers.

These differences of opinion called into active operation by the death of Wesley.

The death of Wesley greatly excited the holders of strong opinions on both sides of the question. Those who were anxious to maintain inviolate a close union with the National Church, felt apprehensive that advantage would be taken of that event to alter the general usage of

* "Minutes," vol. i., 8vo., p. 299.

the Connexion in respect of the administration of the sacraments; while those who desired this change, saw removed that which was regarded as the greatest barrier to such an alteration. The deep and general sorrow which the death of Wesley excited, however, placed all these hopes and fears in abeyance for a short time.

The Hull declaration.

The first public demonstration taken in the case was the issue of a circular from Hull, dated "May 4th, 1791," about two months after the death of Wesley. It was signed by eighteen laymen. After condoling with the Connexion on the loss it had sustained, and praying for unity and grace, it expressed a strong determination to adhere to the doctrine and discipline "which our departed father established among us." It then proceeds: "We are well convinced that the usefulness of the Methodists has been, and will be, greatly increased by their continuance in connexion with the Church of England; and we believe, as did the late Rev. Mr. Wesley, those of them who separate from the Church of England 'will dwindle away into a dry, dull, separate party.' We cannot consent to have the sacraments administered amongst us by the Methodist preachers, nor to have preaching in the Methodist chapel here during the hours of divine service in the church." Of this circular Mr. Pawson says, "The letter from Hull is, I think, a very impertinent, foolish, and ill-timed thing, a thing that they had no sort of business with, and has a direct tendency to do mischief. Some have treated it with the contempt it deserves. Others have returned a very spirited answer to it. But I hear that Mr. Mather approves of it, and has returned a friendly answer. I have wrote him my thoughts of it very freely."*

* Pawson's MS. letter to Atmore, "May 17th, 1791."

Resolutions to the same effect as the letter from Hull, but still more decided in tone, were adopted at Birmingham, and circulated through the Connexion by the authority of Mr. Benson, who was the assistant in that Circuit at the time. From Sheffield, also, a similar circular was issued, signed by forty-five of the leading laymen of the Circuit, and countersigned by all the preachers there, attesting that they knew no person in the Circuit who did not entertain such views.

Followed by other appeals to the Connexion on both sides.

On the other side, Julius Hardy, on behalf of himself and others at Birmingham, published a circular letter, in which he protested against Mr. Benson's resolutions, deplored the agitation which had been thus begun, and insisted that the Methodists should only be bound to adhere to Scripture. This was followed by another circular, which was sent from Newcastle-on-Tyne, and professed to be a formal reply to the "Hull declaration." From this lengthy document we give the following forcible passages: "You brethren at Hull have ministers in the Church, which perhaps exceed all others for piety and uprightness of conduct; but do your *pious* ministers prevent profligate sinners from approaching the altar? Do they resolve they shall not share in the ordinance till they are, at least, reformed in their outward conduct? Are you, brethren, justifiable in eating with such in so sacred an ordinance? Does not the Holy Ghost charge you to come out from among them? Are you not solemnly called to turn away from sinners and loose professors, who have a form, but deny the power of godliness? Does not the apostle forbid our eating in private with a man who is called a brother, who is a fornicator, &c.? And are you clear in sitting down with the worst of sinners at the Lord's Supper?..... Let us ask, Do you not believe, in your heart, your

preachers are called of God to the work of the ministry? Have they not gifts for the work, which render them acceptable to most that hear them? Are they not in general men of sound experience and good morality? Do they not give proof of their piety in their life and conversation? Are they not zealous of promoting the glory of God, in your salvation, and in the conversion of all that hear them? Do they not labour night and day for this, preaching publicly, and from house to house? Are you not selected from the world, and, by your own choice, connected with them? Do they not instruct, exhort, encourage, support, build up, warn, reprove, rebuke, censure, suspend, &c., and in every sense watch over your souls as they that must give an account to God for you? Has God given them this power, and called them to no further labours of love for your furtherance in the divine life? Has God forbidden these men baptizing your children and giving you the sacrament? Can you suppose that your preachers, who are men of piety and ability to minister the word, should be under the necessity of sending you among the ungodly for that ordinance, which is the most sacred in Christianity?" These sentiments were put forth with the signature of William Smith, Wesley's son-in-law, the Circuit and Society stewards of Newcastle, and two of the preachers, Charles Atmore and Joseph Cownley.

Minute of the Conference of 1791 on the subject, variously interpreted.

These various publications were extensively distributed throughout the Connexion; and during the excitement produced by such conflicting influences, the Conference of 1791 was held. Notwithstanding the other important matters which pressed on the attention of this assembly, the following minute was made on this subject: "*Q.* Is it necessary to enter into any engagement in respect to our future plan of economy? *A.* We

engage to follow strictly the plan which Mr. Wesley left us." "This answer," as Mr. Myles justly observes, "was variously interpreted, according to the wishes of the two parties already mentioned." * Those who desired Methodism to be kept in close union with the Church, regarded it as a pledge that Wesley's oft expressed determination to do this, would still be maintained. On the other hand, Mr. Pawson, and many other eminent preachers and laymen, said, "Not so; our 'old plan' has been to follow the openings of Providence, and to alter and amend the plan, as we saw it needful, in order to be more useful in the hand of God." † Such persons construed the minute in their favour; and hence we find Mr. Hanby, who had been allowed to administer the sacrament in Wesley's lifetime, determined to continue to do so where the people desired it. ‡ Mr. Atmore declares that, having "solemnly promised upon my knees, before God and His people, that I would give all diligence, not only to preach the word, but to administer the sacraments in the church of God," he dared not refuse to comply with the earnest wishes of the people, when they desired him to administer the Lord's Supper to them. Mr. Pawson speaks of many preachers who had determined to follow a similar course, adding, "The truth is this: I believe there are many places in different parts of our Connexion where the people will have the sacraments; and if they are refused, they will leave us." § Nor did the zeal of these preachers terminate here. Those who had been ordained by Wesley and other clergymen during his life, united in

* Myles's "Chronological History," p. 205.

† Letter to Atmore, "May 17th, 1791."

‡ Pawson's letter, "October 7th, 1791."

§ "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1845, p. 214.

ordaining their brethren. In this manner, three of the preachers were ordained at the Newcastle District Meeting, and three others at Manchester.

The decision of the Conference of 1792 respecting the sacraments.

But while several of the preachers united with the people in promoting the administration of the sacraments in Methodist chapels, others—indeed, at this time, a large majority of them—were decidedly opposed to any innovation. In these circumstances the Conference of 1792 assembled, and the subject of allowing the sacraments to be given by the preachers was brought, as a matter of course, under discussion. Those who were in favour of conceding the boon which so many of the people solicited, pleaded that the urgency of the case was greatly increased by the removal of Wesley, who was accustomed to administer the sacraments to the Societies during his periodical visits to the several localities,—a privilege which was by his death entirely lost. They also urged that a most unreasonable difference was thus made between the Methodists in London and those in the country; the former having the sacraments regularly administered in their chapels, while the latter were wholly deprived of them, or compelled, at least in very many cases, to receive them at their parish churches from irreligious men. But, on the other hand, some insisted on following the course which Wesley had so earnestly recommended. These differences of opinion in the Conference were strengthened by applications from the people; petitions and remonstrances were received from different parts of the kingdom; the debate grew warm; many feared these disputes would lead to a division in the Connexion; and, when no way of reconciliation presented itself, John Pawson proposed that for the year the question should be decided by lot. This was agreed to, and some time was spent in

earnest prayer to God for His guidance and blessing. Lots were then prepared, and the lot was drawn by Adam Clarke, who, standing on the table, read it aloud: "You shall not give the sacrament this year." John Valton, who wrote an account of the proceeding, observes, "His voice in reading it was like a voice from the clouds. A solemn awe rested on the assembly; and we could say, 'The Lord is here, of a truth.' All were either satisfied, or submitted; and harmony and love returned." *

This decision and the preceding debate led to the adoption of the following minutes:—

"*Q.* What rules shall be made concerning ordinations?

"*A.* 1. No ordination shall take place in the Methodist Connexion without the consent of the Conference first obtained.

"2. If any brother break the above-mentioned rule, by ordaining or being ordained without the consent of the Conference previously obtained, the brother so breaking the rule does thereby exclude himself.

"*Q.* What rule shall be made respecting the administration of the Lord's Supper?

"*A.* The Lord's Supper shall not be administered by any person among our Societies in England and Ireland for the ensuing year, on any consideration whatever, except in London."

It is of consequence to observe here, that these measures were not taken with a view to settle the question finally, but rather for the avowed purpose of deferring the settlement until the feverish excitement which then pervaded the Connexion should have passed away, and both preachers and people should be better prepared for a calm and religious consideration of the matter. Therefore, in prohibit-

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1845, p. 217.

ing the administration of the Lord's Supper in any Methodist chapel out of London for one year, no opinion whatever was expressed as to the authority possessed by the preachers for the performance of this ministerial act, nor as to the expediency of complying with the wishes of those who desired it. The decision of the lot, and the prohibition in the minute, were both limited to one year. Much as the preachers were divided in judgment on the general question, they were united in a strong desire "that peace and union might be preserved." In the hope of securing this, they submitted the question, as they believed, to the decision of the Lord, by using the lot, and unanimously agreed to abide by the result.* Indeed, the exception in favour of London was made, not because there were clergymen there, for in reference to chapels everywhere else the prohibition extended to these as well as to the Methodist preachers; but because, the sacraments having been always administered in the chapels of the metropolis, perfect unanimity prevailed on the subject in all the Societies there.

Salutary results of this decision.

Whatever may be said of the lot, as a mode of guiding the movements of a religious body in a season of great embarrassment and perplexity, there can be no doubt whatever of the salutary effect of the measure thus adopted. The alienation of feeling, and even bitterness, which these differences of opinion had produced between the preachers and people of the respective parties, were very great. Indeed, the wisest and best among both ministers and laymen could scarcely dare to hope for any solution of the difficulty but by a disastrous division of the united Societies. Those who resisted the introduction of the sacraments were stigmatized as "high Churchmen;" while, on the other hand, they who wished to receive the

* See Appendix A, at the end of this volume.

sacred ordinances from their own ministers were denounced as Dissenters, who were unfaithful to the principles of their founder, and rebels against the essential principles of the "Old Plan" of Methodism.

The suspension, for one year, of any action calculated to give offence, afforded to all parties leisure for calm reflection and prayerful inquiry into the real merits of the case. And there can be no doubt that throughout the Connexion, both among preachers and people, there were great searchings of heart, and a very earnest and general looking to God for direction in the impending decision of this vital question. It is indeed surprising, considering the deep earnestness called forth by a strong desire for the sacrament in several places, that there should have been so general a submission to the decision of Conference. Even while this assembly was debating the question, the Society of the important town of Liverpool was appointing two elders to administer the sacrament to them, before the arrival of Mr. Taylor, their newly appointed superintendent. The prohibition, therefore, was to them a great disappointment; and also to many in Manchester, and in numerous other Societies.

The suspension of the sacrament did not produce unity of opinion.

The operation of the interdict of the Conference, however, did not reconcile or moderate the conflicting views which obtained on this subject. On the contrary, this decided prohibition greatly encouraged the advocates for what was called the "Old Plan," to hope that it would after a while be made perpetual; while, on the other hand, as it cut off the privilege from many Societies which had previously partially enjoyed it, what had formerly acted as a safety valve was closed, and a deeper sense of want was felt, and consequently a more intense desire for an alteration of the rule created. Indeed, so strong were these

feelings on both sides, that the best-informed of the preachers, and many of the people, still regarded a great schism in the Connexion as inevitable. "I am well satisfied," observes Mr. J. Pawson, then President, "that except liberty is given to those preachers and Societies who wish to have the sacrament, we shall have a division both among the preachers and people."* In all probability this apprehension exerted a very salutary influence, and caused the leading men on both sides to listen with readiness to moderate counsels. The District Meetings of Manchester, Halifax, and Leeds, this year passed formal resolutions against violent speeches on the subject. Yet nothing could restrain many of the most eminent and energetic among the ministers from supporting the urgent claims of the people. Adam Clarke, who, although a young man, had raised himself, by his piety, devotedness, and great capacity, to an eminent position among the preachers, boldly declared, "that he was resolved to have liberty of conscience, or go to the ends of the earth for it." And many other preachers were coming to the determination "to administer the sacrament where the people desired it, and to take all consequences."

Serious disagreement between the preachers and trustees at Bristol.

But circumstances which transpired at Bristol this year excited the greatest feeling throughout the Connexion. Soon after the Conference of 1792, Messrs. Bradburn and Roberts conducted the opening services of Portland Street chapel, in that city. At the request of some of the trustees, they on that occasion put on gowns and bands, and read the liturgy, (slightly altered,) in a surplice. This conduct gave great offence to the Rev. William Embury, minister of the parish; and he published a letter to the Methodist preachers, condemnatory of such

* Letter to Mr. Rodda, dated "Halifax, March 28th, 1793."

proceedings. To this publication Mr. Bradburn immediately produced a smart reply. Such a controversy, if confined to these parties, would not have been a very unusual occurrence, or one likely to be productive of serious consequences. No sooner, however, had Mr. Bradburn's letter appeared, than the trustees of the "Old Room," as it was called, (the original Methodist chapel in Bristol,) who had from the beginning evinced the greatest anxiety for the maintenance of the "old plan," prepared and printed a paper, in which they disavowed all that had been done by the preachers in this matter. Thus assailed on both sides, Mr. Bradburn retorted by publishing a very spirited and sensible letter, detailing and explaining the whole case. All the other preachers on the Circuit attached their signatures to this letter, testifying their approbation of its contents, as did all the new trustees of Portland chapel, and eighteen of the male leaders. Considering that the trustees of the "Room" were but six in number, this showed pretty clearly the general sense of the Bristol Methodists on the subject. It was very frankly stated that the preachers had assumed these clerical vestments at the request of the trustees, and that, having worn them once, and finding it gave offence to some of the members, they wore them no more. Yet as these several papers and letters were sent throughout the Connexion, this new dispute tended greatly to increase the disquiet and uneasiness which had previously existed.

The Conference of 1793, and its regulations.

While these conflicting influences were acting on preachers and people, the Conference of 1793 assembled. Of it and its deliberations Mr. Charles Atmore thus wrote: "Our Conference began; there appeared a blessed spirit of love amongst us, which I hope is a token for good. On Tuesday our grand debate respecting the sacrament began.

I had my fears, but they were disappointed! I had my hopes, but they were exceeded! Never did I more clearly see the gracious interposition of the 'God of peace,' or the manifest defeat of the designs of the sower of discord. The subject was discussed on both sides with great candour and impartiality; great earnestness was evinced, but no undue warmth of spirit. The result was, that we should submit to each other in the fear of God. We therefore resolved, that, in those places where the members of the Society were unanimous in their desire for the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at the hands of their own preachers, it should be granted; and all distinctions between ordained and unordained preachers should cease; and that the being received into full connexion by the Conference, and appointed by them to administer the ordinances, should be considered a sufficient ordination, without the imposition of hands. The preachers who were in favour of these propositions amounted to eighty-six; those who voted against them were forty-eight; so that the measure was carried by a majority of thirty-eight." *

These decisions were placed on the Minutes, and made known to the Societies in the form of a letter, entitled, "An Address to the Members of the Methodist Societies throughout England, from the Conference assembled at Leeds, August 6th, 1793." In this letter, the difficulty in which the Conference was placed between two contending parties is clearly stated; its anxiety to maintain the unity of the body, to remove all ground of contention, and to supply to the members of the Societies who could not receive it elsewhere the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is set forth. Further, the Address avers that this measure

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1845, p. 221.

was forced on the Conference by the people; but that the privilege granted to a few did not alter the character of the body, the members of which were exhorted to "continue, as usual, in connexion with the Church of England." *

The following resolutions, bearing on this subject, were also passed at this time, and printed in the Minutes:—

"*Q.* Are there any directions to be given concerning the dress of our preachers?

"*A.* No gowns, cassocks, bands, or surplices, shall be worn by any.

"*Q.* Is any direction to be given respecting titles and distinctions?

"*A.* 1. The title of *Reverend* shall not be used by us toward each other in future.

"2. The distinction between ordained and unordained preachers shall be dropped."

These not satisfactory to either party.

As might be expected, this decision, although hailed as a great favour by those who desired to have the sacrament administered in the Methodist chapels, did not fully satisfy either party. The zealous advocates of the "Old Plan" saw in it a decisive defeat, and earnestly desired to have the minute rescinded; whilst those who, as they termed it, were struggling for liberty of conscience, found it a very unsatisfactory measure, inasmuch as one individual member among a thousand could prevent the sacrament from being administered to a whole Society, so long as he continued to press his objection. Happily the following year was one of great religious prosperity, and tended in a good degree to turn away the public mind from disputation. And it is likely that the administration of the Lord's Supper itself contributed in no small measure to this prosperity. The following is a remarkable, but by no means a

* See Appendix B, at the end of this volume.

solitary instance: it is given in Mr. J. Pawson's account of the administration of the sacrament at Liverpool, soon after the Conference of 1793. He says, "The Doctor" (Coke) "gave us the sacrament last Sunday. We had about five hundred people, and a most glorious time it was, as I ever saw. The people were amazingly affected. How many were set at liberty I have not yet heard. It surely was heaven upon earth to perhaps all that were there." *

The rapid spread of the desire for the introduction of the sacrament rendered the following Conference a very exciting one. The wish to enjoy this privilege was not, as had been previously supposed, confined to a few places. The Societies connected with nearly one hundred chapels applied to the Conference of 1794, under the provisions of the minute of the preceding year, as unanimously desiring to have this sacred ordinance administered to them by their own preachers.

The minute of 1794 respecting the sacrament.

The progress of these opinions, and other reasons, induced a large body of trustees to assemble at Bristol at the time when this Conference was held. After some delay, a negotiation was opened between the Conference and this body, which issued in the following enactment: "As the Lord's Supper has not been administered, except where the Society has been unanimous for it, and would not have been contented without it, it is now agreed that the Lord's Supper shall not be administered in future, when the union and concord of the Society can be preserved without it." †

This minute appears like a concession to both parties. For, while it insists upon a desire for the introduction

* Pawson's letter to C. Atmore, "Liverpool, October 9th, 1793."

† Octavo Minutes, vol. i., p. 299.

of the sacrament so strong "that the union and concord of the Society" could not be preserved without it, and therefore might be supposed, in some measure, to check its rapid introduction; on the other hand, it removes the necessity for a "unanimous" desire, and therefore affords a majority of a Society the means of obtaining the object of their wishes. Many of the trustees, however, and especially those of the Old Room at Bristol, clearly saw in these successive changes the progress of the views and policy which they had so stoutly, but so ineffectually, opposed. They were, therefore, determined to take the first opportunity of boldly and openly resisting the measures they so greatly disliked. And such an opportunity soon offered.

Renewed causes of disquiet at Bristol.

The preachers appointed to Bristol, at this Conference, were, Joseph Benson, Henry Moore, Richard Rodda, and Thomas Vasey. It happened that, during the sittings of the Conference, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper had been administered in Portland chapel. This was repeated the day after the Conference closed, Mr. Moore taking part in the service. Two days afterwards he was served with a legal notice by an attorney, under the signature of the trustees of the Old Room and Guinea Street chapel, stating that the premises were *bonâ fide* theirs, warning him, at his peril, not to trespass on their property, reminding him that they had not appointed him to preach, and that no other persons had any authority so to do. It was a happy circumstance for the Connexion that this aggression was made on one so well able to repel it as was Henry Moore. But it was a very serious case. If the trustees of Bristol could thus, without any trial, inquiry, or even charge, expel from the pulpits a minister whom the Conference had appointed, the trustees of

other places might do the same; and then the chapels being held in the absolute power of a few men in each place, the working of Methodism would become impossible.

At first, Mr. Moore thought his proper course would be to retire from the place in which he had been subjected to such indignity. But he was diverted from this course by the sympathy and support which he received from the Society. "The people hearing, on the same day, of the steps which the trustees had taken, the whole body of the leaders, and the other official men of the Society, went to Mr. Moore, and endeavoured to dissuade him from leaving his post, saying, 'his going would make a greater division in the Society by far than would result from his remaining; for they would stand by him to a man, being determined not to submit to one chapel ruling the whole Circuit;' adding, 'that the body of the people were likewise resolute upon the same point.'" Thus sustained, Mr. Moore resolved to go to the room or chapel in Broadmead in the regular course of his duty; and on proceeding thither he found the trustees in the pulpit. He quietly told them that without disputing their legal power to prevent him from officiating, he felt it to be his duty to inform the people of the reasons for which he was excluded. Having done this, and read them the attorney's letter, signed by the trustees,* he added, "Though they, the trustees, had the power to prevent him from preaching on their premises, yet they had not the power to restrain him from administering the Gospel of the grace of God, and therefore he should immediately proceed up the hill to Portland chapel, where the word of God was not bound. So saying, he turned, and left Broadmead, followed by a great concourse

* See Appendix C, at the end of this volume.

of people to Portland chapel; not twenty individuals remaining to hear the preacher whom the trustees had appointed to preach."

This rupture was soon made known to the Connexion at large by circular letters, the mode of advertisement then in frequent use. The people in general, without looking narrowly into the merits of this particular case, formed their opinions according to their respective party feelings. Those who professedly adhered to the "Old Plan," prohibiting the sacraments in Methodist chapels, sided with the trustees; while those who desired their introduction supported Mr. Moore. Thus the dissension, which appeared to have been settled, was renewed with greater violence than ever. Even Mr. Benson, the superintendent of Bristol, who arrived to take charge of the Circuit about a fortnight after this occurrence, and was a distinguished member of what was called the High Church party, united himself with the trustees who had expelled his colleague from their pulpit.

In these painful circumstances, Mr. Moore appealed to his brethren of the District, and a meeting was accordingly summoned. Having carefully examined the whole case, all the preachers present, with the exception of Messrs. Benson, Rodda, and Vasey, came to a resolution approving of Mr. Moore's entire conduct in the business. Yet Mr. Benson, and his other two colleagues, not only voted against this, but actually set the authority of the District Meeting at defiance; and persisted in preaching in the pulpits from which their legitimately appointed colleague, Mr. Moore, was excluded. Meanwhile Mr. Moore, acting on the advice of the District Meeting, called in the aid of two or three preachers who had been appointed to other Circuits, and continued preaching in

Portland chapel and elsewhere, as he had opportunity. Thus Bristol for that year was virtually worked as two Circuits.

The result of this quarrel in the erection of King Street chapel.

But one great result of this unhappy dispute was the erection of the commodious Ebenezer chapel in King Street, not far from Broadmead. The people, being determined to show the few trustees of the Old Room their utter inability to resist the general sense of the Society, projected this erection promptly, and carried on the building with such spirit that it was opened in the course of the year, and virtually superseded the Old Room in Broadmead. It is, however, a happy circumstance that we need not now give even an abstract of the mass of letters which lie before us, and which were sent through the length and breadth of the land for the purpose of sustaining one or the other of these conflicting parties. In the midst of this contention, and while many even of the preachers thought the breach too wide to be healed, and consequently looked on a great division of the Connexion as inevitable; the two men who had been brought into the most violent collision, and who had felt more than ordinary temptations to irritation and hostility, were labouring to devise some mode of reconciliation. As early in this Methodistic year as February, 1795, Messrs. Benson, Moore, and Bradburn met by appointment at Kingswood, and after much conversation agreed upon the basis of a plan for removing the cause of these disputes, and reconciling the parties so violently opposed to each other. On the 1st of April the same parties again met in the same place and for the same purpose, and made further progress with the plan for pacifying the discontented. And on the 5th of April following, Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore breakfasted with Mr. Benson in Bristol, and con-

Messrs. Benson and Moore unite to devise some means of pacification.

versed together for two hours with the same object.* Thus were these good men, while zealous in the support of the particular courses which they believed to be most accordant with Scripture and reason, equally ready to extend the right hand of fellowship to each other, and to unite for the purpose of restoring unity and peace to the Societies.

The Conference of 1795, and its deliberations on the subject in dispute.

While all the measures proposed for the adjustment of existing differences were still in embryo, and the Societies were more divided in sentiment respecting the sacraments than at any previous period, the Conference of 1795 assembled. The preachers felt the vast importance of their decisions on the subjects in debate, and the necessity of divine illumination and guidance. They, therefore, most appropriately set apart the first day for fasting and prayer. This course had a very beneficial effect, and the proceedings were opened with feelings suitable to so great a religious emergency. The first business of importance was the appointment of a Committee charged with the duty of drawing up a plan for removing existing grievances. It was agreed that the number should be nine, who were to be chosen by ballot. Each preacher had nine slips of paper given him, on each of which he was required to write a brother's name; and the nine men whose names were found on the greatest number of papers, were elected. The choice of this Committee was very remarkable; for although there must have been a majority on one side or the other, the men chosen were not only the most eminent in the Connexion, but they represented every shade of opinion respecting the matter at issue. They were, Joseph Bradford, (the President,) John Pawson, Alexander Mather, Thomas Coke

* MACDONALD'S "Life of Benson," pp. 274–276.

William Thompson, Samuel Bradburn, Joseph Benson, Henry Moore, and Adam Clarke.

The Plan of Pacification.

This Committee entered on its task, and produced a plan, which, with the alteration of a single article, the Conference passed unanimously. It was then submitted to the trustees assembled for the purpose, who approved it by a large majority, adding a few suggestions, which the Conference adopted. As regards that part of this great "Plan of Pacification," * (I.,) which relates to the administration of the sacraments, the most important change from previous usage was this, that "the sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered in any chapel, except the majority of the trustees of that chapel on the one hand, and the majority of the stewards and leaders belonging to that chapel (as the best qualified to give the sense of the people) on the other hand, allow it. Nevertheless, in all cases, the consent of the Conference shall be obtained, before the Lord's Supper be administered." It was also provided that, wherever "the Lord's Supper has been already peaceably administered, the administration of it shall be continued in future." † Various other regulations were made as to the manner in which the sacraments should be administered, in reference to the burial of the dead, service in church hours, &c.

These arrangements were not only a great improvement on all preceding rules; but they were also found to be efficient, almost universally; so that at the ensuing Conference, when the case was reviewed, it appeared that all the complaints which had been made on this matter referred rather to individuals who had departed from the spirit of the rule, than to any defect in the rule itself.

* See Appendix D, at the end of this volume.

† Minutes, vol. i., p. 322.

The following are the minutes of 1796 bearing on this subject:—

"*Q.* Have the regulations respecting the sacrament been duly attended to? Minutes of 1796.

"*A.* We have had some complaints on both sides. To remedy which, in future, the Conference agree, 1st. That those Societies which have the sacrament allowed according to the Rules of Pacification, shall have it duly administered; and that if the superintendent will not administer it himself, he shall provide some other preacher who is properly qualified to do it; so that the people may not be deprived of their privilege. 2ndly. That every preacher shall attend with the utmost exactness to that Rule in the Pacification Plan which states, that no preacher shall, directly or indirectly, endeavour to excite any Society to have the Lord's Supper; nor, on the other hand, strive to set any Society against that blessed ordinance; but leave the people everywhere entirely free.

"*Q.* Is there any direction necessary as to the admission of communicants to the Lord's Supper?

"*A.* No person shall be suffered, on any pretence, to partake of the Lord's Supper among us, unless he be a member of our Society, or receive a note of admission from the superintendent, which note must be renewed quarterly. And if any stewards, leaders, or trustees refuse to be regulated by this rule, the sacrament shall not be administered where this is the case."* The requirements of the case were so fully met by these provisions, that when at the following Conference it was necessary to add many important regulations for the improvement of the discipline of the body, it was scarcely found requisite to mention the question of the sacraments. These measures were successful, and their operation very beneficial.

* Minutes, vol. i., p. 348.

It is an important fact, that, notwithstanding the restriction afforded by making the consent of a majority of the trustees necessary to the introduction of the sacrament into any chapel in which it had not been previously administered, so strongly was the religious want of this ordinance felt, that the demand for it steadily progressed, until in a few years it became general throughout the Connexion.

Concluding observations. The demand for the sacrament arose out of a religious necessity.

Having thus succinctly stated the progress and issue of this controversy, two observations appear to be called for. First: The administration of the sacraments throughout the Methodist Societies was occasioned by a deeply felt religious necessity. It was not a political movement, not a sectarian clamour, but a spiritual and godly requirement, which led to this result. But it may be said, this want could have been met by an occasional attendance at the respective parish churches. This objection was frequently urged at the time with the greatest confidence, and has been often repeated since. We, notwithstanding, venture to put the inquiry, Is it really true? All that a worldling or formalist would desire could thus be obtained. The requirements of the Test and Corporation Acts could be fulfilled in this manner; but could the spiritual needs of a sincere Christian man be met by the reception of the sacrament in the parish churches, considering what was then the character of very many of the clergy? It is true, some Methodists earnestly advocated this course. One in the heat of debate is said to have declared that he would receive the sacrament from the devil; and others strongly urged that the hands of a wicked minister could not corrupt the bread and wine. To a Mr. Grey, who urged this objection, a Methodist, in a manuscript letter now before us, thus replies: "Who ever thought of their corrupting these? But are there no

prayers offered up to God at the sacrament? And did Mr. Gray never read these words in his Bible, 'The prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord?' The man that was born blind can tell him, 'We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.' Yet Mr. Gray, with all his wisdom, is foolish enough to think that those very prayers which 'are an abomination to the Lord' are as useful to his soul as any others; and that although God heareth not sinners, yet he himself is very well satisfied to hear them, and quite contented although God never returns an answer." However bluntly these sentiments are expressed in this extract, they will find an echo in every enlightened heart. The man who desires to approach the table of the Lord in a truly devout spirit, will require at least reasonable proof that he who ministers to him in holy things is a godly person; and it is notorious that the general character of the established clergy at this time did not afford such evidence. But we venture to go further than this, and say, that a truly Christian man will desire to receive this sacred ordinance from his own minister. For a man to be enlightened, brought to God, and built up in Christian doctrine and experience, instrumentally by the labours of one minister, and at the same time to have no means of receiving the Lord's Supper but from the hands of another person of whose piety he has no proof, is an anomaly which enlightened Christianity will not long endure.

Our second observation refers to the conduct of the preachers in this case. It has been frequently and loudly asserted, that the change in the Wesleyan economy by which the Methodist people obtained the privilege of receiving the sacraments in their own chapels, was brought

And did not proceed from the preachers, but the people.

about by the studied design and continued efforts of the preachers. No charge ever preferred against public men can be more groundless or unjust than this. Dr. Adam Clarke, who certainly ought to be regarded as a competent witness, declares, "It is an utter slander to say that the preachers excited the people to clamour for the ordinances, because they wished by it to promote their own honour and interest. I believe not a soul of them dreamed of such a thing." Indeed, so contrary is this allegation to matter of fact, that there can be no doubt, as already shown, that the majority of the preachers were against the innovation throughout all the early part of the controversy; and, indeed, until the entreaties of the people became so urgent in 1793, that they could no longer be resisted. We accordingly find John Pawson, who was anxious for the concession of the sacrament to the people, and who knew the views and feelings of the preachers of his time as well as any one, lamenting the prevalence of High Church views among his brethren. After alluding to certain manifestations of feeling in this direction, he observes, "I am heartily sorry to see such a spirit among the preachers." * No candid person can honestly review all the circumstances of the case without coming to the conclusion, that so far from promoting this change, the preachers resisted it until the progress of discontent had nearly destroyed the peace and greatly endangered the unity of the body.

* MS. letter, "May 22nd, 1792."

CHAPTER II.

THE CONDUCT, TRIALS, AND EXPULSION OF MR. ALEXANDER KILHAM.

DIFFICULTY of properly placing the Subject of this Chapter—Mr. Kilham officiates as a Methodist Preacher—Important Incident in his early Course—Effect of this on Mr. Kilham's Mind—His Efforts to impress the Connexion with his Views—A Secession at Newcastle leads him into Controversy—Mr. Kilham's first Trial at the Conference of 1792—He is censured by that Body—A Review of Mr. Kilham's Conduct in this Case shows that this Censure was justly merited—Mr. Kilham Superintendent of Aberdeen—Writes and circulates an anonymous Paper throughout the Connexion—The disingenuous Character of this Address—Sketch of Kilham's Scheme of Methodist Polity—He continues publishing on this subject: his "Priscilla and Aquila" and "Martin Luther"—Plan and Character of the latter Piece—"Paul and Silas" published—Mr. Kilham publishes his "Progress of Liberty"—The London Preachers demand a Special District Meeting for the Trial of the Author of this Pamphlet—Mr. Kilham replies to this Demand, denouncing it as "the London Methodistical Bull"—The Trial deferred to the ensuing Conference—Peculiar and painful Position of Methodism—The Effect of this State of Things on those who had then to direct the Affairs of the Connexion—Circumstances of Mr. Kilham—The Conference proceeds to his Trial—Mr. Mather's Questions, and Mr. Kilham's Replies—The Conference lays down two Resolutions for its Guidance—The Course of Procedure—The first Charge investigated—The Decision on it—The second Charge examined and decided on—The third Charge, consisting of several Articles, considered—First Article—Second—Third—Fourth—Fifth—Decision on the third Charge—The Fourth Charge, and the Conference Decision—The fifth Charge, and the Judgment of Conference respecting it—Discussion in the Conference on the whole Case—Sentence of Expulsion pronounced on Mr. Kilham—General Observations on Mr. Kilham's Objections, Demands, and Assertions—This Event tested the Stability of the Methodist People—Happy Results.

Difficulty of properly placing the subject of this chapter.

We have felt considerable difficulty in the allocation of the subject of this chapter. Its importance demands separate and consecutive record; yet it is so intermixed with the agitations and discussions which led to the changes made in Methodist polity in 1795 and 1797, that it is difficult to adjust the precedence. The present order has been adopted, as most likely to afford a complete and accurate view of the whole subject.

Mr. Kilham officiates as a Methodist preacher.

Mr. Kilham was a native of Epworth; was converted, became a Methodist local preacher, and went to the Norman Isles in the service of Mr. Brackenbury, as previously related.* He offered himself to Wesley for the itinerant work in 1785, was accepted, and appointed to the Grimsby Circuit, when about twenty-three years of age. Pending his differences with his brethren, and after his expulsion, some rather severe observations were made respecting the humble position which he occupied in the service of Mr. Brackenbury, and the alleged irregularity in the manner of his introduction into the Methodist ministry. To these remarks Mr. Kilham's friends have attached undue importance, and have evinced unreasonable sensitiveness in repelling them. The truth, perhaps, lies nearly midway between the rival statements; but the matter itself is altogether beside the question, and unworthy of serious notice. Whatever position Mr. Kilham previously occupied, or by whatever means he was placed before Wesley and the Conference, as a candidate for the Methodist ministry, it is an undoubted fact that he was heartily and honourably received; that he entered on the duties of his office as a pious, zealous, and industrious young man; and that he gave early evidence of more than ordinary energy and ability.

* Vol. i., p. 536.

While, however, we are disposed to attach no importance whatever to the allegations above referred to, it is necessary to observe, that one circumstance took place before Mr. Kilham was received by Wesley as an itinerant preacher, which probably had more influence on the course of his future life than controversialists have perceived, or even than he himself was aware. When Mr. Brackenbury went abroad, he left Mr. Kilham at his seat, Raithby Hall, with liberty to employ his time as he might think best. It happened just then, that one of the four preachers appointed to the Grimsby Circuit (within the limits of which Raithby Hall was situated) never came when appointed. Mr. Dufton, the superintendent, therefore entreated Mr. Kilham to supply the vacant place. He did not consent to do this, but offered for a while to preach on Sundays, and occasionally to assist in other ways. While he was thus employed, another of the preachers on the Circuit was taken ill. This affliction rendered the assistance of Mr. Kilham more than ever necessary, and seems to have led him to conclude that, for the present, this was his providential place: he accordingly entered on the full work of a Circuit preacher, and continued to discharge its duties until the ensuing Conference. Preaching on one occasion at a place called Skendleby, near Spilsby, he was interrupted by the Rev. Edward Brackenbury, incumbent of the parish, and brother of R. C. Brackenbury, Esq., who objected to his doctrine, and held him in debate on the subject for nearly an hour. As the preacher had the better of the parson in the argument, the latter felt annoyed; and, on consultation with others of the clergy, it was determined, if possible, to prevent the Methodists from preaching in the neighbourhood. The Rev. E. Brackenbury sent a message to Mr.

Important incident in his early course.

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Kilham to this effect; telling him at the same time that, had he not been residing at his brother's house, Raithby Hall, he would at once have sent him to Lincoln Castle. There was but one way of defence against this aggression, and it was by licensing the places of worship and the preacher. The former was done immediately; and when the Quarter Sessions arrived, Mr. Kilham appeared, and claimed a license to preach, under the provisions of the Toleration Act. The Rev. Mr. Brackenbury, who was on the bench, urged the refusal of the application: he was, however, informed, that the magistrates had no discretion, but were bound to grant the license to any applicant willing to take the oaths which the Act prescribes. Foiled in this attempt, Mr. Brackenbury insisted, as was not uncommon at that time, that the privileges of the Act were available only for those who were Dissenters from the Church of England. He then put the question to Mr. Kilham, "Are you a Churchman, or a Dissenter?" Mr. Kilham endeavoured to evade a direct answer, but in vain. We are therefore told, that when "Mr. Kilham was obliged either to give up all thoughts of obtaining a license, and of preaching any more, or to comply with what the law required, and, without either mitigation or comment, to profess himself to be a Dissenter, he decided upon doing the latter; and having taken the oaths as a Dissenter, he received his license, and went on preaching at Skendleby, and elsewhere, as usual." * We are further informed, that Mr. Kilham's notions of consistency were very strict and uncompromising; and "regarding himself as thrust out" of the Church by the intolerant conduct of the clergy at the above-mentioned Quarter Sessions, he said, "From that time I considered myself as a *real Dissenter*." The

* "Life of Alexander Kilham." Groombridge. 1838.

italics are in the narrative from which we quote; from which, and the tenor of a long note at the foot of the page, we are led to understand that Mr. Kilham, unlike Baxter, Bates, and others, did not call himself a Dissenter, because he did not in everything conform to the Church; but that, by being a "*real Dissenter*," he meant one wholly alienated from, and opposed to, the National Church Establishment.

Effect of this on Mr. Kilham's mind.

We have said we regard this as a very important consideration. Wesley, at the time referred to, was above eighty years of age; his removal, therefore, could not be distant. And it was certain, that soon after his death important modifications or developements of the economy of Methodism must take place. The question, therefore, arises, Was Mr. Kilham—young, (for he was not thirty years of age when Wesley died,) ardent, energetic, able, and a real Dissenter—was he likely to take part in the discussions and deliberations which were to arise, and to agree to such arrangements and modifications of the Methodist economy as would be approved by the great body of Methodist preachers? It is freely admitted that many of the Methodists of that day, and not a few of the preachers, had very little sympathy or respect for the Church of England. But it is equally true, that very many had so fully imbibed the spirit which up to a very late period regulated on these points the views of their founder, that the separation of Methodism from communion with the Establishment would by them be regarded as the date of its ruin. Were these parties, then, provided their difference of opinion did not divide the Connexion into two rival sects, likely to adopt any middle course, with which a young and ardent Dissenter, like Mr. Kilham, with notions of consistency strict and

uncompromising, was likely to accord? We think not. And whatever his friends thought at the time, or his admirers may think now, it is clear to us that, long before the death of Wesley, Mr. Kilham regarded the subject in precisely the same aspect as we do. The following passages, taken from private papers on which he wrote his religious thoughts and feelings for his own use, seem decisive on this point:—"I am resolved," he says, "to continue an itinerant preacher as long as my life and health continue, *provided there be no alteration after Mr. Wesley's death, that shall make it most advisable to desist.*" And again, "God knows my resolution is *to continue in the Connexion while I can do it with a clear conscience.*" Do not these expressions clearly prove that Mr. Kilham saw principles in operation, and changes impending, which would render his continued union with the body not only unadvisable, but incompatible with his keeping a clear conscience? The issue, therefore, which we shall have to consider, is not one which could only proceed from great unfaithfulness or crime on his part, or great change or tyranny on the part of the authorities of Methodism. On the contrary, there was such difference of judgment between the two parties, that circumstances might at any time arise to sever their connexion, without criminality on either side. Nothing further of any moment bearing on this subject occurred, before the death of Wesley; unless it may be necessary to mention that, just before that event, Mr. Kilham's second child was born; upon which one of the leading men in the Whitby Society, who was warmly attached to the Church, wished the child to be baptized by the clergyman. To this "Mr. Kilham objected on principle, maintain-

ing that, as a Dissenter, it would be inconsistent to have recourse to the Establishment on such an occasion."*

Mr. Kilham's efforts to impress the Connexion with his views.

No sooner, however, had the death of Wesley produced in the Methodist Societies an anxious concern respecting the future polity of the body, than Mr. Kilham earnestly endeavoured to impress the Societies with his views, and to induce them to pursue a corresponding course of action. As mentioned in the last chapter, the famous Hull circular was the first sound of discord and agitation which fell on the ear of the Societies after the founder of Methodism had passed to his reward. Immediately on the appearance of this document, Mr. Kilham wrote a reply to it. But here it is to be noted, that while the Hull circular emanated from a meeting of leaders, local preachers, stewards, and people, many of whom signed their names, Mr. Kilham's reply was issued anonymously; and, to keep the secret of its origin perfectly, it was posted at York, and sent to the Methodists of Newcastle-on-Tyne. The leading men of the Society there adopted this document with some unimportant alterations; and, having added a postscript, they had it printed and circulated through the Connexion, as an antidote to that which had issued from Hull. The opening paragraph of this address will show the design of the writer: "Dear Brethren,—We readily acknowledge your good intention in addressing us in the affectionate manner you have done. With you, we bemoan the loss of so valuable a man from the head of our Connexion. We wish to follow him in doctrine and discipline, as he followed Christ. Mr. Wesley was always greatly attached to the Establishment; and, in the warmth of his zeal, wrote in defence of his people communicating in the Church. But, since God has called him from us,

* "Life of Kilham," p. 122.

would it not be advisable for us to enter into an impartial examination of our principles and conduct before we proceed any farther? If Mr. Wesley has left us rules exactly agreeing with the law and the testimony, we should follow them with avidity; but should it be found, on near inspection, that in some things he has been mistaken, (and who is not liable to mistake?) ought we not as soon as possible to lay our mistakes aside? We are called on by an apostle to '*prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.*' It is for the honour of any person or body of people to renounce error and embrace truth."

It is not intended to dispute the axiom so ingeniously interwoven into this passage, nor to argue at all respecting it, but to call attention to one evident fact:—its scope and design is, to effect an alteration in Methodism as it then was. For this purpose, it is suggested that Wesley might be mistaken, as all are liable to mistake; that it is the duty of all to test their opinions and practices by the Scriptures; and that, therefore, this examination ought then to take place in Methodism, and every detected error be renounced. So that Mr. Kilham commenced his career as a reformer, by attempting to reform the Methodism of Wesley.

With these views, in the then excited state of the Connexion, Mr. Kilham was soon brought into active exertion, and into trouble. At the Conference of 1791 he was appointed to labour in the Newcastle Circuit with Mr. Gaulter, who was of the same ministerial standing, under the superintendency of Mr. Cownley, a senior preacher. All these preachers were favourable to the sacraments being administered to the Societies in the Methodist chapels. At Newcastle, however, the trustees and a part of the Society were opposed to this measure; but, as others

desired the privilege of receiving the Lord's Supper from their preachers, what was regarded as a middle course was adopted. There was a chapel about two miles from Newcastle, which had been erected by a Mr. Johnson at his own expense; and, as he was quite willing, it was decided that Mr. Cownley, who had been ordained by Wesley, should administer the ordinance at Byker chapel, and thus afford members of the Society at Newcastle the privilege they sought by a moderate walk, without offending the feelings of those who were opposed to the measure.

A secession at Newcastle leads Mr. Kilham into controversy.

This was done. But, temperate as the step seemed, it gave great offence, insomuch that three class-leaders, and, it is said, "about twenty members, left the Society." One of these, a Mr. Grey, wrote a letter to Mr. Cownley, in which he condemned his conduct, and reproached him for the course he had taken, in very strong terms. To this Mr. Cownley sent a mild reply. Mr. Grey wrote again; and we are told, by Mr. Kilham's biographer, that Mr. Cownley received this second letter "just as he was returned from a journey much fatigued, and was preparing to go into the country part of the Circuit; and, having neither time nor inclination to reply to it himself, he put the communication unopened into Mr. Kilham's hand, and begged him to write to Mr. Grey in return."* Mr. Kilham did so, and in consequence several letters passed between the parties. Not long after this correspondence Mr. Kilham was surprised to learn that Mr. Grey had published it in a pamphlet with a prefatory note, and some remarks of his own. Mr. Kilham, not liking the controversy to close in that manner, soon afterward prepared and sent forth "An Address to the Members and Friends of the Methodist Society in Newcastle, 1792." As this was one

* "Life of Kilham," p. 148.

of the first publications on the vexed question of giving the sacraments in Methodist chapels, it attracted great attention, and was commended by Mr. Pawson and other preachers and lay friends. Yet, notwithstanding their praises, at the Conference of 1792, Mr. Kilham was placed on trial for the production of this piece.

Mr. Kilham's first trial at the Conference of 1792.

The following are the passages which were read in the Conference as the ground of complaint: "We have often been represented as enemies to Mr. Wesley and the interests of Methodism. But this charge is exceeding unjust. We declare in the sight of God, and before all the world, that *his memory* is exceeding dear to us. We are conscious he was much owned of God, and signally blessed to thousands in his labours. But we cannot think Mr. Wesley was infallible. The doctrines essential to salvation he explained and enforced with great judgment and success; and the discipline he established in his Societies is hardly to be equalled in any denomination of Christians in the world. His plan of changing preachers so frequently, has been productive of the happiest effects. But is it reasonable to suppose that Mr. Wesley, amidst so many excellencies, had no infirmities? Shall we consider his determinations as conclusive in every thing, and follow his counsel, without daring to examine it by the word of God? Are we enemies to this great apostolical man, because we think he held *some notions* which are not founded on the Scriptures, and are now desirous of laying them aside? If we were to take every thing he has said, and maintain it with warmth against his opponents, we might be justly reproached as enemies to the character we wish to establish." *

A second passage objected to was the following: "Our

* Preface, p. iv.

Connexion has not reached the perfection which is held out to us in the Gospel. Several things must be removed, and others substituted in their place, to bring about the desired end. If *a few bigoted persons, who never think for themselves,* call this 'innovation,' every sensible man will highly esteem our conduct." * What follows was the last: "It appears that our being closely united to the Established Church is founded on reasons not justifiable from the Scriptures. It is more honourable to attend service at the church than to worship among the Dissenters. It takes away a good deal of the scandal of the cross. It may be advantageous to our business in the world. It may bring us to fill up places in the nation which may be greatly helpful to our families, that we could not occupy were we Dissenters of any denomination. Our being connected so closely with the Church cannot be looked on in any other light than a specious trimming between God and the world. We never met with any arguments for our continuing closely united with the Church but what are political, or, in other words, carnal, and sold under sin." †

He is censured by that body.

We have taken these passages *verbatim* from Kilham's tract published in 1792. We have no reliable account of the manner of this trial. Mr. Kilham's recollections of some of the speeches delivered, a summary of which is published by his biographer, cannot be regarded as impartial or complete, even if we give both the utmost credit for candour and honesty. The result, however, appears to be undoubted. The Conference decided that Mr. Kilham acted imprudently in writing and publishing the pamphlet. The work itself was then condemned, as calculated to spread division and dissension in the Methodist Societies. But on Mr. Kilham's making a very

* Preface, p. v. † Page 20.

qualified declaration of his regret for having offended the Conference, and given it trouble and pain, it was agreed to receive such confession.

Mr. Kilham's friends exhibit this trial and the censure pronounced on him as a triumph. "Mr. Kilham," they say, "in his cause and conduct, was so manifestly in the right, that there can be little doubt of his having been more satisfied in his conscience with his defeat, than his accusers were with the victory they had gained over him."* Before we look further, we will do Mr. Kilham the justice to admit that, in our judgment, the question respecting the administration of the sacraments in Methodist chapels was at that period very properly raised; nor have we any doubt that the balance of Christian right and scriptural authority was largely in favour of those who contended, as he did, for the concession of this privilege. Yet we can by no means assent to the judgment of Mr. Kilham's friends, as given above.

A review of Mr. Kilham's conduct in this case shows that this censure was justly merited.

For, although we make this admission in the largest sense, we cannot forget how the Methodist people had been trained up by Wesley in unity with the National Church, and in veneration for her ordinances. And even Mr. Kilham admits that preachers and people thought it their duty to comply with his will while he ruled in our Israel, out of affection to him as their father in the Gospel.† Was it reasonable, then,—was it justifiable,—to refuse to such persons some time for consideration before they changed their opinions?—for their enlightenment, if those who advocate Mr. Kilham's views wish to have it so? Were not the devoted adherents of Wesley's principles and practices entitled to some considerable forbearance and Christian charity? And surely, if they had a right to

* "Life," p. 169. † Preface to Address, p. v.

demand it from any one, it was from Mr. Kilham. He had entered the Methodist ministry a sworn Dissenter. Admitting his entire conscientiousness, he must have seen that, before the death of Wesley, his principles and views were not precisely those of the body to which he had become attached. Surely, then, he was not the man to press for an instant change of the system, as soon as Wesley was removed, even before he had been in the grave twelve months; and, as one means to secure his object, to denounce that which had been the distinguishing badge of Methodism throughout the lifetime of its founder, as a time-serving, mercenary course, which took away much of the scandal of the cross, and for which no arguments had been given but such as were "carnal, sold under sin."

Further, it appears to us that the language which Mr. Kilham applied to those who held opinions different from himself was very unbecoming. He says, "Several things must be removed, and others substituted in their place, to bring about the desired end. If a few bigoted persons, who never think for themselves, call this 'innovation,'" &c. Now Mr. Kilham knew very well that Thompson, Benson, Mather, Dr. Coke, and many others, would call the changes which he desired to bring about "innovations." Some of these preachers had borne the burden and heat of the day, labouring for souls, and rearing up the Methodist Societies, before Mr. Kilham was born. Some of them were men of considerable learning and intellectual power. It was not, therefore, in our judgment, decent or right for Mr. Kilham to call such men "bigots, who never think for themselves."

After all that has been said in its defence, we regard the language used by Mr. Kilham in the first quoted passage from his Preface, in respect of Wesley, as very repre-

hensible. Mr. Kilham thought Wesley held *some notions* which are not founded on the Scriptures. And we are given to understand that this language must be justified, or it must be believed that Wesley was infallible. It seems that, in his view, there was no medium between two such extremes, no room for doubt; for anything between regarding him as infallible, and proclaiming to the world that he held notions contrary to the word of God! And these *notions*, be it remembered, were not stray opinions respecting indifferent and private matters; but such as formed the basis of certain parts of the Methodist economy and discipline, or else Mr. Kilham could not desire to "lay them aside." His language is, "Because we think he held some notions which are not founded on the Scriptures, and are now desirous of laying them aside." For, certainly, when Mr. Kilham says he is desirous of laying Mr. Wesley's notions aside, he means some measures or practices which had been raised on these notions. Nor must we be led away from a just view of the case by the pretence that this is put hypothetically. There is nothing of this sort in the allegation respecting the unscriptural character of Wesley's notions. The hypothesis is, whether Mr. Kilham was to be regarded as an enemy or not. "Are we to be regarded as enemies to this great apostolical man," &c. What follows is clearly the alleged matter of fact on which this question rests. Nor must it be forgotten that all this is mere allegation. These notions are not specified; their unscriptural character is not shown; there is no proof, or even attempted proof: yet this daring assertion is sufficient, we are told, to place Mr. Kilham by the side of the Reformers of the sixteenth century! We have no hesitation in recording our judgment that the statement before us is entirely unjustifiable.

Lastly: we think Mr. Kilham would be deserving of censure for this publication, if nothing but his standing as a minister were taken into account. His probation terminated at the Conference of 1789. He had then, before God and His church, adopted Methodism, and it had adopted him as one of its ministers. Yet in about two years and six months from that time he comes forth as an avowed reformer: changes must be made; those are bigots who dissent from him; even Wesley is unscriptural! Whatever the piety, or intelligence, or good intentions of the man, we must regard such conduct as out of place in one who had been fully recognised as a minister less than three years. Much exception has been taken to the proceedings against Mr. Kilham, because Mr. Bradburn and Mr. Taylor, who had also published pamphlets on the subject in dispute, were not also put on their trial. But the cases were by no means similar. They wrote in more temperate language, and their ministerial standing was so different, that a course which was fairly called for in the one case, might be justly omitted in the other.

Mr. Kilham superintendent of Aberdeen.

The Conference which censured Mr. Kilham sent him as superintendent to Aberdeen. As his views were so strongly in favour of the administration of the sacraments to the people by the preachers, this appointment must have been very agreeable to him, there being no limitation to the administration of the ordinances in Scotland. But immediately after that trial, and its issue, it seems most extraordinary that Mr. Kilham should have been charged with the superintendency of a Circuit. This fact appears to be a sufficient answer to all the charges which have been made against the preachers of that day, as having displayed personal unkindness to him. If there had been the remotest tendency or disposition of this kind

in existence, he would not have been superintendent of Aberdeen.

If, however, the Conference thought that an act of great kindness and confidence would induce Mr. Kilham to pursue a more discreet line of conduct, and to confine himself for the future to the proper work of a Christian minister, abstaining from all endeavours to disturb the peace of the Societies, it was greatly mistaken. A few months only had elapsed after he had entered upon his new Circuit, before he prepared and circulated a sort of handbill, covering rather more than three large quarto pages, in double columns. It was headed thus: "To all Local Preachers, Circuit Stewards, Town Stewards, Class-Leaders, and intelligent Persons in the Methodist Societies and Congregations, this Letter is most respectfully addressed by their affectionate Brethren and hearty Well-wishers, C. Trueman, M. Freeman."

Writes and circulates an anonymous paper throughout the Connexion.

In noticing the successive productions of Mr. Kilham, we shall only make a few passing observations on them, for the purpose of showing their character; deferring any particular examination of their tendency to the time when we give an account of his trial. In this address, speaking in the character of the Methodist people, he says, "We have several very considerable evils to complain of, which have given us and many others a great deal of uneasiness." He then refers to the addresses which were sent by several of the Societies to the last Conference; and on this subject his language is so extraordinary that we give it entire. "They were the voice of a numerous and respectable body of ourselves. This voice should have been heard, whether it could have been complied with or not. But how was it treated? Why, strange to tell, upon a motion being made by a

The disingenuous character of this address.

preacher whose name need not be mentioned, a majority of the Conference voted for their being all destroyed without examination. Thus the business was finished at once. The preachers spent days in trying some of their brethren who got ordained, and the author of a pamphlet addressed to the friends and members of the Newcastle Society, and in other things of little importance; but they had no time to waste in examining the mind and will of their followers. The pamphlet alluded to was written on liberal principles; and, in our opinion, the author deserved the thanks of the Conference, instead of being censured. We have read it ourselves, and wish every thinking person in our Connexion would peruse it. To return. Their conduct in destroying our petitions was as gross an insult as could have been offered unto us. One would at least think, that they are as independent of us as the state clergy are of their followers; but this is not the case. We do not wish to be unreasonable; but we will be heard, or our resentment shall be felt." We have given this lengthy extract, that the reader may judge whether a preacher thus personating two of the people,—saying that a slight to them is an insult "to us;" that "we have read the pamphlet," which he himself wrote; and lauding it,—acts according to truth and godly simplicity. Is this the conduct of a Christian minister, whose "notions of consistency were very strict and uncompromising?" Besides, when Mr. Kilham wrote thus, he well knew that all the addresses referred to related to the administration of the Sacraments by Methodist preachers, so that to read one was to know the purport of all. The paper then gives an outline of a new scheme of polity for Methodism. 1. Every Society is to choose its own leaders and stewards; and these, the Circuit stewards; with a

Sketch of Kilham's scheme of Methodist polity.

general election of leaders, town and Circuit stewards, every year, the people being at liberty to re-elect their old leaders, or to elect new ones. The leaders were to meet the classes alternately, as the local preachers preach at the different places; one great object of this being, to make the leaders the proper representatives of the people. 2. When any one gave a word of exhortation, or evinced promise of being a local preacher, it would be the business of the leaders to collect the sense of the Societies and congregations; and, if the report be favourable, he is to have a plan, and to be employed. 3. He who has laboured successfully as a local preacher, to be proposed at a Quarterly, and then at a District, Meeting, and, if approved, to be taken out to travel. 4. More care was recommended in the taking men out, &c. 5. Preachers recommended to improve their minds by education, and more carefully to study their sermons. 6. Preachers misbehaving to be sent home. 7. Every preacher who is able to travel to have a Circuit. 8. No man to continue as a preacher, or supernumerary, if his want of health made it impossible for him to perform the duties of the office. 9. More care should be taken in admitting members, &c. 10. A majority of leaders, fairly chosen by the people, ought to know the minds of their electors, and act according to their will in all things, &c.—These are the weighty matters urgently recommended; and their announcement is followed by various suggestions relating to an improved mode of directing the financial affairs of the body. Mr. Kilham's friends speak exultingly of the fact, that, this address being published anonymously, "although several of Mr. Kilham's confidential friends knew him to have been the writer, the secret was kept until such time that he did not care to acknowledge its paternity." We can

easily conceive of such a course being justifiable, when the civil power is arrayed against religious freedom, and prepared to imprison or destroy those who pass over the limits it has prescribed. But in the case of a purely voluntary religious society, which a man might leave at pleasure any day, so as to be free to employ his energies and powers elsewhere, without fear of any penal consequences, we confess we cannot reconcile such conduct with the proper character of a Christian minister.

Mr. Kilham continues publishing on this subject: his "Priscilla and Aquila" and "Martin Luther."

This secret being so well kept, Mr. Kilham continued a minister, and superintended a Circuit, in the Connexion in which, according to his judgment, such considerable evils existed, and which required such complete renovation. As no new difficulty arose, he passed safely through the Conferences of 1793–4. Soon after his return from the last-mentioned annual assembly, he issued a pamphlet on the Bristol disputes, under the title of "Priscilla and Aquila," which does not require any special notice. But, early in 1795, he wrote a circular, covering seven pages quarto, and signed, "Martin Luther," which he sent to the preachers. The primary object of this production appears to have been to counteract a plan for ordaining all the preachers, and appointing over the several sections of Methodism superintending pastors with a kind of episcopal authority. A notion of this kind had about this time obtained serious consideration. To this project Mr. Kilham was greatly opposed; and in the paper just mentioned, for the purpose of defeating it, he gave a sketch of the history of the church during the first three centuries, from Lord Chancellor King's "Primitive Church." He then supplied an outline of Methodism, and showed that it had no need of bishops, being already framed on the model of the primitive church, with the exception of such alterations as he

Plan and character of the latter piece.

suggested. Then followed the author's views on the controversy at Bristol, with advices respecting the proper course of proceeding in that case. We quote two or three passages, to show the manner in which Mr. Kilham expressed himself on some rather nice points: "Every superintendent is the bishop of his Circuit. His colleagues in full connexion are his presbyters. All his colleagues on trial, and local preachers, are his helpers. It is probable, when the sacrament is universally given, every superintendent will have power to authorize respectable and useful local preachers, as well as his colleagues, to assist in administering it, and in baptizing children. This will be an ease to him, and advantageous to the Connexion. They will fill up the place in a sacrament that they now occupy in a love-feast. None can oppose this liberty but *narrow-spirited bigots, or lordly over-grown bishops,* who suppose 'they are the men, and wisdom will die with them.'" * These *italics* are Mr. Kilham's own; most other persons will think the language sufficiently strong without them. Again: "As the devil and his angels, with all their helpers, cannot hinder the people from having liberty of conscience with us, the sacrament will soon become universal." † And lastly: "A great deal of evil has been done by the *hasty* unscriptural pieces which were published from the Manchester, London, and Leeds Conferences. What appeared in the newspapers, in circular letters, and in your Minutes, might have been expected from the *conclave* at Rome, or from a *bishop's court* in England; but the sentiments are so illiberal, that they ought to be *expunged* from every record of your Connexion; and, if possible, from the *memory* of all that have heard them." ‡

Mr. Kilham attended the Conference of 1795 at Man-

* Page 3. † Page 4. ‡ Page 6.

chester. He had previously written a tract of twenty-three pages duodecimo, which he caused to be distributed among the preachers at the opening of that assembly. It was entitled, "An earnest Address to the Preachers assembled in Conference, by their affectionate Brethren in the Gospel, Paul and Silas. 1795." It does not merit any special remark, further than to observe that it contains an outline of the author's views respecting what Methodism was, and what it ought to be, given in his usual style.

"Paul and Silas" published.

Mr. Kilham was at this Conference appointed superintendent of Alnwick, to which Circuit he immediately repaired; and he soon afterward returned to his favourite employment of writing on Methodist polity. The reasons assigned for this course, as they stand before us in his Life, are curious. Mr. Kilham, according to his official biographer, states, that the reason which induced him and those other preachers who argued for full toleration, (by which phrase was meant perfect liberty for the preachers to give, and for the members to receive, the sacraments in the chapels,) to accept the "Plan of Pacification," were, that, "1. We have gained a great deal more than we expected. 2. Our people are not prepared for more at present. 3. In two or three years we shall have all we wish." * But we no sooner hear of his having reached his Circuit, than we read, "Mr. Kilham states, that, on returning from Conference, when the Articles of Pacification had been adopted, he felt, on reflection, considerable dissatisfaction that so little had been accomplished towards establishing real liberty in the Societies; and as a likely means of securing to them the full measure to which they were entitled, he judged it would be useful to enumerate the steps already taken, and the regulations which had been made since Mr. Wesley's death; and also

* "Life," p. 225.

to supply an outline or plan of what he considered ought to be done, in order to give content to, and establish peace in, the Connexion." * This purpose was carried into effect; and, in due time, the production appeared under the following title: "The Progress of Liberty amongst the People called 'Methodists.' To which is added, the Outlines of a Constitution. Humbly recommended to the serious Consideration of the Preachers and the People late in Connexion with Mr. Wesley. By Alexander Kilham, Preacher of the Gospel. 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.' (2 Thess. v. 22.) Alnwick: Printed by J. Catnagh. 1795." The title, read in Mr. Kilham's sense, fairly exhibits the object of this little work; which, as its tenets will hereafter come under consideration, we need not describe any further at present. Mr. Kilham had, however, now placed his name, and his views on ecclesiastical polity, in juxta-position, before the Methodist public, and boldly challenged their verdict. He was not left long in suspense as to the course which the leading ministers in the Connexion felt called upon to take.

Mr. Kilham publishes his "Progress of Liberty."

The London preachers demand a Special District Meeting, for the trial of the author of this pamphlet.

Soon after the appearance of this pamphlet, a letter was sent to Mr. William Hunter, the chairman of the Newcastle District, from the preachers of the London Circuit, denouncing the production in the strongest terms, and demanding a Special District Meeting for the trial of its author. When it is stated that among the names attached to this letter we find those of Adam Clarke, Walter Griffith, and Richard Reece, it will be understood by all who are acquainted with the Methodist polity of that day, that the requirement did not proceed from any party adverse to real liberty of communication between preachers and people, either by speaking or writing. Mr. Kilham immediately

* "Life," p. 234.

wrote a reply to this requisition, under the name of "A candid Examination of the London Methodistical Bull." To give special effect to his reasonings, "The Letter of the London Preachers" is prefixed to his "Examination," headed by the figure of a "bull" belching forth flames; a broad black border surrounding the whole letter, as though it called forth the deepest mourning throughout the land. This production, like the preceding, assumes the perfect accuracy of all the author's allegations and assumptions, as though they had been admitted facts. As such, the author proceeds to reason on them, as if utterly oblivious that the truth and propriety of these statements were the very things for which he was called to account.

Mr. Kilham replies to this demand, denouncing it as "the London Methodistical Bull."

After some hesitation and delay, Mr. Hunter summoned a special meeting of the Newcastle District Committee; but that assembly deferred the adjudication of the case to the regular meeting in May. And, when that time arrived, the settlement of the case was referred to the Conference. The regular time for holding this annual assembly at length arrived; and never before had such excitement existed in the Methodist Connexion. Indeed, circumstances abroad and at home were calculated greatly to aggravate any discord or partisan antipathies which might exist in the Connexion. The long smouldering fires of republicanism had in France broken out into the utmost fury of revolution; the throne and the church had been destroyed; the king and royal family, the nobility and clergy, with much that was dignified and virtuous in the land, had perished on the scaffold, or been driven into exile. Nor did it suffice that the French republic had succeeded in breaking down all opposition, and establishing a reign of terror and of blood. It did more. Assailed by an armed confederacy of the

The trial deferred to the ensuing Conference.

Peculiar and painful position of Methodism.

great European nations, it went forth to fight and to conquer its foes on every side: so that, by this time, France had become the terror of all her neighbours, and Britain began to dread a descent on her coasts. This success of France gave spirit and energy to great numbers in this country who sympathized with the levelling and violent political sentiments which obtained in that country. Disaffection to the British government had in consequence been widely engendered, and greatly prevailed; and the mischievous effects of these doctrines were fearfully aggravated by a bad harvest, and the high prices of provisions, which pressed with terrible severity on the labouring classes. Political clubs and associations were formed in all directions; and every effort was made by designing men to induce the working classes especially to believe that a grand confederacy was formed against their interests by the English government and the aristocracy. At length a stone was thrown into the king's carriage, as he was returning from Drury Lane Theatre; and everything seemed to portend some terrible outbreak.

In these times of trouble, the Methodist preachers did not wholly escape odium, in consequence of the indiscreet expressions of one or two weak men. The Connexion was by some supposed to be disaffected to the Crown; while, on the other hand, the firm stand made by the Methodist preachers against the infidel sentiments imported from France, and sown broadcast over the country by the publications of Paine and his disciples, rendered them very unpopular with many; and this was greatly increased by the writings of Mr. Kilham, who had, from 1792, represented the Conference as exerting themselves to keep the Societies in subjection to their will, depriving them of the liberty to which they were entitled by Scripture and reason. Many curious,

and some amusing, illustrations of this painful state of things might be given, did our limits allow. We may just observe that, in one of the popular caricatures of the day, there were represented a number of preachers flying through the air; and among the crowd below, gazing upward, was an old woman, who is depicted in the act of exclaiming, "Pray Heaven they may not light here; they'll devour everything." But this popular odium assumes a more serious aspect, when we find a judicious senior preacher like John Pawson gravely advising that no more preachers should come to the Conference of 1796 "than were absolutely necessary for the transaction of the requisite business; lest the price of provisions should be raised still higher, and both themselves and the chapels fall a sacrifice to the popular prejudice and fury." *

The effect of this state of things on those who had then to direct the affairs of the Connexion.

These circumstances, combined, rendered the direction of the affairs of Methodism at that time a work of great labour, difficulty, and responsibility. This will be detailed at large in its proper place. It is mentioned here for the purpose of showing that those who, from their age and ability, had to take the chief part in the trial of Mr. Kilham, had something more practical to consider than his mere suggestions, and their accordance with the abstract principles of church government. They were bound to regard in some measure the opinions and actions of Wesley. They were under a legal and moral obligation to adhere to the provisions of the "Deed Poll." They had to consider very carefully the effect of any alteration of Methodist law, or any change in the principles of its polity, upon the future well-being of the Connexion; and they had, moreover, so to act as not unnecessarily to excite the ill-will of the government, or the indignation of the populace. Nor

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1845, p. 419.

can the proceedings of the Conference in this case be fairly judged, unless all these circumstances be taken into account.

Circumstances of Mr. Kilham.

It is no more than simple justice to say, that Mr. Kilham had many things to plead, if not as a reason, at least as an apology, for his proceedings, to which no subsequent agitator of Methodism can lay claim. He had been driven by persecution to enter the Methodist ministry as a "real Dissenter." Soon after he had been received into "Full Connexion," Wesley died; whose manner of directing the government of the Societies was such, that his removal must necessarily have led to important changes in its polity. Mr. Kilham saw what he thought those changes should be, and laboured earnestly to direct the mind of the preachers and people to what he regarded as enlightened views; and thus to secure by Conferential legislation the object of his desire, namely, that the Methodist Societies should be governed by a scheme of polity which he conceived to be at once large-minded, liberal, and scriptural. At first, his attention was fixed on the concession of the Lord's Supper to all the Societies which desired it; but afterwards he was led to enlarge his views and desires, and to contemplate an entire revision of the government of the body, as the result of his efforts. Mr. Kilham, therefore, was not like a member of a settled and fully organized community, labouring to subvert its established government. He lived in a time of transition; he saw change inevitable, and struggled to secure that which he thought best. As an individual, he was, of course, perfectly at liberty to approve, and labour to secure, that system of Methodist polity which he called "liberal and scriptural." Whether the Conference could meet his wishes, or ought to do so, was quite another question, and one which they had to decide.

The Conference proceeds to the trial of Mr. Kilham.

The Conference assembled on Monday, July 25th, 1796. Mr. Thomas Taylor was elected president, and Dr. Coke secretary. As soon as the assembly was thus prepared to transact business, Mr. Kilham's case was introduced; on which, with the consent of the Conference, Mr. Mather proposed the following questions to him, to which the annexed answers were given:—

Mr. Mather's questions, and Mr. Kilham's replies.

"*Q.* 1. Do you acknowledge the pamphlet entitled 'An Appeal to the Methodist Societies of the Alnwick Circuit,' dated, '24th May, 1796,' to be yours?

"*A.* I do.

"*Q.* 2. Do you intend to support the third paragraph in the first page of that pamphlet, which declares that 'there are several parts of our plan both unscriptural and oppressive to the people?'

"*A.* I desire time to consider this question.

"*Q.* 3. Do you intend to support the second paragraph of the second page of that pamphlet, declaring that 'no government under heaven, except an absolute monarchy or papal hierarchy, is so despotic or oppressive as ours,' or words to that purport?

"*A.* I desire time to consider this question.

"*Q.* 4. Do you intend to support the second paragraph in the third page of that pamphlet?—'Priestcraft is the same in every sect and party,' &c. &c. And do you mean to support this, as our character, according to the implication of that paragraph?

"*A.* I desire time to consider this question.

"*Q.* 5. How long have you been received into Connexion?

"*A.* I have travelled nearly twelve years.

"*Q.* 6. Did Mr. Wesley receive you into Full Connexion, and did he give you the Minutes of the Conference?

"*A.* Mr. Wesley received me into Full Connexion, and I think gave me the Minutes of the Conference.

"*Q.* 7. Did you then promise and intend to support and execute these Minutes and Rules, as far as your situation enabled you?

"*A.* I did, according to my knowledge of them.

"*Q.* 8. Will you abide by that engagement, or do you retract it?

"*A.* I desire time to consider this question."

The Conference then desired Mr. Kilham to withdraw till he should give in his answers to the above questions. On the next morning he delivered-in a written paper which the Conference judged to be no answer at all, but merely a repetition of what he had before advanced in his pamphlets.*

The Conference lays down two resolutions for its guidance.

The Conference was addressed by Mr. Thompson, Dr. Coke, and Messrs. Moore and Bradburn. The following minutes were unanimously adopted:—

"1. The Conference unanimously agree to confirm the minute made in the first Conference held after the death of Mr. Wesley; viz., 'We engage to follow strictly the plan which Mr. Wesley left us at his death.'

"2. As an explanation of the above, the Conference unanimously determine to abide by the Large Minutes of the Conference, in everything which respects both the doctrine and discipline contained therein." †

As Mr. Kilham voted for both these minutes, it was observed by one of the preachers, that by so doing he had recanted all his late publications. In reply to this obser-

* "Minutes of the Examination of Mr. Alexander Kilham, before the General Conference in London, on the 26th, 27th, and 28th July, 1796," pp. 3, 4.

† "Minutes," p. 4.

vation, Mr. Kilham said that he agreed to the preceding minutes as far as they were agreeable to the Scriptures. But, in answer to this, it was urged, "that we believe in the Koran of Mahomet as far as it is agreeable to the Scriptures; but we agree to the Minutes because we believe *them* to be agreeable to the Scriptures. Mr. Kilham then observed that he saw only *some little things* in the Large Minutes which he did not approve of." *

The course of procedure.

The Conference then proceeded to the trial. The course adopted was this: a charge was made; this charge was supported by one or more passages from Mr. Kilham's works, which were thought amply sufficient to sustain it; and these were read at length. Mr. Kilham was then called upon to show that the charge was not proved by these extracts from his pamphlets, when taken in the sense in which he wrote them. The Conference, having heard all that he had to say, came to the resolution that such charge was or was not proved. Another charge was then, in a similar manner, preferred, and disposed of, and so on, until the whole had been dealt with; when the Conference came to its final judgment on the entire case.

This may at first sight appear a strange mode of conducting a judicial examination, and so it was; but this arose entirely out of the peculiarity of the case. If Mr. Kilham had been accused of committing any offence, and pleaded not guilty of the charge, the *onus* of proof would clearly lie on the accusing party, and it would be for them to bring forward such evidence as would satisfy those who had to decide on the case that he was guilty; or, failing in this, he would be declared not guilty. But nothing of this sort existed in this case. Mr. Kilham had, in many of his own acknowledged pamphlets, published statements reflect-

* "Minutes," &c., p. 4.

ing on Wesley, on Methodism as a system, and on the moral and religious character of the preachers. The authorship of these passages was not denied, but boastingly admitted, and no further proof could make the writing and publishing of these passages more criminal, religiously and Methodistically, than it appeared to be on the first reading of them. Mr. Kilham therefore went to the bar of the Conference, as a man would go to the dock at Newgate, who had written and published what every one but the criminal and his abettors admitted to be high treason. The circumstances of the case precluded all need of further evidence or argument: all that was requisite to subserve, at the same time, the ends of justice and of mercy, was to afford the accused party every opportunity of explaining the sense in which he used the language he had employed, of justifying it and proving its truth, or of withdrawing any part of it, or expressing contrition for the publication of it.

The course taken in Mr. Kilham's case was adapted and designed to afford him every facility for this purpose; and, as will be seen in the sequel, the spirit and manner in which the proceedings were conducted were such as to elicit the commendation even of Mr. Kilham himself.

The first charge investigated.

The first charge against him was this: "Mr. Kilham has advanced, that 'many of the local and travelling preachers want abilities for the work in which they are engaged.'" This charge was based on a passage found on page 30 of the "Progress of Liberty." *

At first Mr. Kilham answered, that this was not put as

* "Are there not many local, not to say travelling, preachers who cannot explain, to the satisfaction of any sensible Christian, a number of doctrines which are essential to our salvation?"

an assertion, but as a question; but this was regarded as a quibble. He then refused to give any instances in proof of his statement; his only answer still being, "It was a question for information."

The decision on it.

The Conference then decided unanimously that "Mr. Kilham has not proved this allegation, and, therefore, is culpable for making it." *

The second charge examined and decided on.

The second charge was, "That Mr. Kilham has charged the preachers with being guilty of spiritual tyranny." This charge rested on passages taken from "Progress of Liberty," "Bull," "Trial," and "Appeal." †

When called upon to justify or explain these passages in respect of this charge, Mr. Kilham replied that he had given his answer to this in the written paper handed in at

* "Minutes," p. 5.

† "1. 'Progress of Liberty,' p. 19: 'We detest the conduct of persecuting Neros, and all the bloody actions of the great Whore of Babylon; and yet, in our measure, we tread in their steps.'

"2. 'Bull,' p. 26: 'And do not many of the preachers also want to bind you in chains of their own making?'

"3. 'Bull,' p. 28: 'That the reign of Popery is fully ended *even among us*, is a doubtful case with me. Is it not a species of Popery to keep our people ignorant of a number of things which concern their happiness?'

"4. 'Trial,' p. 9: 'Is it possible to torture the words of this passage to imply that I have cruelly represented the body of Methodist preachers to be spiritual tyrants, and sons of the great Whore of Babylon? If in anything we wish to force the consciences of our people, or withhold any of their privileges from them, so far as this is our conduct, we in *some measure* imitate spiritual tyrants; and resemble, in *some respects*, the sons of the great Whore of Babylon.'

"5. 'Appeal,' p. 2: 'No government under heaven, except an *absolute monarchy*, or the *papal hierarchy*, is so despotic and oppressive as ours is. Can it be supposed that a system of this nature would never be abused to the reproach of our Connexion? Does it not open a way for designing men to act tyrannically and dishonestly? Is it not calculated to create jealousies and distrust in our leading men?'"

the commencement of those proceedings; adding, "If that does not satisfy, I have nothing more to say."

It was then unanimously decided, "This allegation has not been proved, and Mr. Kilham is consequently culpable." *

The Conference then declared that they had "no power but what the Spirit and love of God, and the love of the people, have given and continued to them." †

The third charge, consisting of several articles, considered. First article.

The third charge was then adduced. It was, that "Mr. Kilham has charged the preachers with immorality, in the following particulars: First article. That the preachers have imposed upon the people in bringing out improper persons from selfish motives." Two passages from the "Progress of Liberty" were cited in support of this article.‡

* "Minutes," p. 6. † *Ibid.*

‡ "1. 'Progress of Liberty,' p. 33: 'While Mr. Wesley lived, he acted according to his own will in receiving many to travel in our Connexion. Many persons were brought from different Circuits by the influence of individuals, who would never have been recommended by the people where they had frequently preached. The local preachers, the trustees, leaders, and stewards, were amazed and grieved at their having *crept* among us, in such a *dark, unfair way*.'

"2. 'Progress of Liberty,' pp. 33, 34: 'I as an *assistant* may wish to have the honour of sending many labourers into the vineyard of Christ; and, therefore, thrust out *against the minds of the people* such men as are unfit for the work, to gratify my vanity. Or, I may like to *lounge at home* with my family when I ought to go to *disagreeable* or *distant places*, and appoint a local preacher to supply for me. He does it cheerfully, hoping one good turn will make way for another. When he has hacked about for me throughout the year, as *a reward for his services* I get him a place among the travelling preachers, *without stooping to ask at a Quarterly Meeting* whether he will be suitable or not. Or, I may see a man that has not attended well to his business, and is on the borders of being a bankrupt, and does not know what to turn his hand to. His pitiful stories may work on my passions; and, without *consulting with the people* in the Circuit where I labour, I may get him accepted both at the District Meeting and the

In reply to this part of the charge, Mr. Kilham said, "The statement was a supposition arising from the present rules existing among us; and that one of the objections brought against him on this charge amounted, on his part, merely to the proposal of a question."

The judgment of the Conference on this article was, that Mr. Kilham's charge against the preachers, in this instance, "has not been proved. Mr. Kilham's defence is an evasion; and he is therefore culpable in both these respects." *

There was one, and but one, dissenting voice to this judgment. It objected to the insertion of the term "evasion."

The second article.

The second article of this charge was, "That the preachers have only mock examinations of their characters." To prove that this charge had been published by Mr. Kilham, passages were read from his "Progress of Liberty" and "Trial." †

In reply to this charge, Mr. Kilham said that he main-

Conference. Have not these methods been pursued to bring out preachers ever since the death of Mr. Wesley? And has not the Conference been deceived by some of its members, and accepted men to labour with us that are to this day a *dead weight* to the Connexion?'"

* "Minutes," p. 7.

† "1. 'Progress of Liberty,' p. 38: 'Our present mode of examining each others' characters only makes sensible people laugh at us.'

"2. 'Trial,' pp. 12, 13: 'In different Circuits where I have been, many of our friends have considered this examination in no other light than a *solemn farce*. I could name a Circuit or two last year, where the preachers had been at variance for several months before the Conference. They mutually accused each other of different things which were contrary to their happiness and usefulness in the vineyard of Christ. But when their names were called over in the Conference, they had *nothing against each other:* though no reconciliation had taken place previous to their meeting in Manchester. Does what Mr. Wesley said in the pulpit prove that this mode is the best in the world? Is there any argument in his challenging his hearers to produce anything of the kind?'"

tained it in its full force as *his opinion*. He was then called upon for any instance of a mock examination, or to name any preacher who had been tried by a mock examination; when he answered, "I think that has no connexion with the subject; and that all the examinations taken in the Conference, without the people having a single voice by themselves, or their representatives, are mock examinations."

The Conference then came to a unanimous judgment: That "Mr. Kilham has not proved his allegation; on the contrary, he has in effect refused to enter into any proof of it. In both these respects the Conference judge him to be culpable."*

To this judgment the Conference appended the following: "N.B. The Conference have not only at all times received the written or verbal testimony of our people concerning the preachers, but have called upon them to bear their testimony in every question of this kind."†

The third article.

The third article under this head was his statement, "That the preachers have wasted the public money." Passages from the "Progress of Liberty," and "Trial," were read to support this charge.‡

* "Minutes," p. 8. † *Ibid.*

‡ "1. 'Progress of Liberty,' p. 41: 'They' (the people) 'will prevent us from wasting that money, which in part has been collected from many that needed it to supply their own wants.'

"2. 'Progress of Liberty,' p. 48: 'At the same time they would see that the monies collected from *a poor and afflicted people* were not foolishly and sinfully *lavished away*.'

"3. 'Progress of Liberty,' p. 54: 'For while we *whine* and *cant*, like *begging friars*, to excite compassion in our friends, under a *pretence* of supporting worn-out preachers and their widows; and *prostitute their charity* to support rich old men, and the young widows of old men; what Jesuit ever acted a baser part than we act?'

In defence, "Mr. Kilham said that respecting the third part of the third charge, viz., that 'the preachers are guilty of wasting the public money,' he has answered it on the thirteenth page of the 'Trial.'" *

On Mr. Kilham being asked what he referred to in respect to a want of economy; he answered, "that he referred to the long and unnecessary removes of preachers and their families; and their travelling in stage-coaches when they might ride on horseback; and in the inside of coaches when they might travel on the outside." † He was then desired to produce any instances of such culpable doing. He named some, and they were carefully considered; and in all of them the Conference judged that there was no more expense than was unavoidable. Mr. Kilham further acknowledged that there are many long

"4. 'Trial,' p. 42. 'According to the minutes I have quoted from Mr. Wesley's "Journal," all the public collections are to be made by an assistant preacher, or by his direction. In the "Progress of Liberty," and in the examination of the "London Bull," I endeavoured to prove that a great deal of money is misapplied; that the Yearly, the Kingswood School, and the Preachers' Fund collections, especially the two last, are managed to the dishonour of our Connexion.'"

* The following is the passage referred to: "I shall consider want of economy and equity; waste; foolishly and sinfully lavishing away the people's money, together. I will state a few cases, and then apply them; and this shall be confined to the last Conference. 1. A great number of preachers were present that had no business to transact; who had no right to be there by the rules of former Conferences. 2. Several preachers left good horses in their Circuits, and went by coach, that might have travelled at one-fourth of the expense had they gone on horseback. 3. Many travelled in the inside of coaches who might have travelled for half the expense on the outside. 4. Long removes of families. Only compare the Minutes of the two last years, and you will find many long removes. Several large families removed to a great distance from whence they were before."—"Trial," pp. 13, 14.

† "Minutes," p. 9.

removes of preachers and families which are expensive and necessary; and that he himself was an instance of this kind, but that many others were unnecessary.

The Conference then came to a unanimous vote, that "Mr. Kilham has not proved this allegation, and is therefore highly criminal for bringing this charge." *

The fourth article.

The fourth article of this charge set forth, that Mr. Kilham asserted "that the preachers have been guilty of swindling." This charge was founded on extracts taken from the "Progress of Liberty" and the "Trial." † On

* "Minutes," p. 9.

† "1. 'Progress of Liberty,' p. 43: 'For want of this equitable plan, I have known persons receive from the Conference, *and from the Circuits*, such sums as would have been rejected with indignation in a Quarterly Meeting.'

"2. 'Progress of Liberty,' pp. 43, 44: 'But nothing has created such uneasiness among our people as collections made for horses. I could relate several things on this subject, which would only wound and grieve our serious friends.'

"3. 'Progress of Liberty,' p. 45: 'I could relate four or five true narratives which would justify every step I have recommended. These are so well known in many Circuits, that the remembrance of them to this day is very grievous to our people.'

"4. 'Trial,' p. 15: 'In my pamphlet I said, for want of an equitable plan, I have known persons receive from the Conference, and *from Circuits*, such sums as would have been rejected with indignation in a Quarterly Meeting. The leaders and stewards would have considered it downright swindling. I will only produce one instance here to prove my assertion; but I pledge myself, if called upon by the Conference, to produce several others of a similar nature. Mr. R—— removed with his wife and family from Hexham to Thirsk. He demanded three guineas (I think that was exactly the sum) from the Hexham stewards to help him to his new appointment. This was amply sufficient, as he had a good horse to ride on himself. He received other three guineas from the Conference. The preachers supposed that, as the Hexham Circuit was so much in debt, the stewards could not remove him. But when he received both these sums, he would not return either of them. This same preacher sold a horse, with a saddle and bridle, for about eight guineas, before he went to Thirsk, and pocketed the money.

these being read, Mr. Kilham stated in reply, that "he meant *only* want of economy." On being called on to produce an instance, he mentioned the person referred to in one of the extracts cited. This person had been suspended from the ministry, and was under suspension when Mr. Kilham wrote his pamphlet; and Mr. Kilham acknowledged that he knew, when he wrote the pamphlet, that that person was out of the Body.

The Conference then read and placed on their minutes a letter from the circuit steward of the Ripon Circuit, in explanation of the charge contained in the second extract just quoted. The material part of this letter is as follows: "The plain truth was this: When Mr. R—— came, he said, that on account of sickness, &c., in his family, he had run into debt, and was under the necessity to sell his horse to pay it; and, so far from either demanding or desiring a horse to be bought for him, he proposed to walk the Circuit. Mr. Thomas Harrison, the assistant, and Mr. R. W., the other circuit steward, and I, talked the matter over; and, knowing how extensive the Circuit was, thought it impossible for him to supply it: therefore, of two evils we chose what we thought the least, and set a private subscription on foot for another horse. It would be well,

But when he came to his new appointment, he demanded of the people to enter into a subscription, and buy him a horse. Is there no swindling in matters of this nature? I am bold to aver, that while our people are not allowed to know how much money we collect, and how it is disbursed, we labour under temptations to dishonesty, which would be removed, were they admitted to a proper share in the management of our affairs.'

"5. 'Trial,' pp. 16, 17: 'Honesty never shrinks from responsibility. In many Circuits where I have travelled, I heard the people declare they had their fears respecting some of our brethren with regard to their honesty. And as they had an opportunity of concealing their affairs from the notice of leaders and stewards, this led them to imagine that they would not be exact in some cases.' "

before you publish such positive assertions to the world, that you was more careful not to exceed the bounds of truth."*

Mr. Kilham was called on for another instance; and he mentioned the conduct of a respected brother, then in Connexion, concerning a horse. The conduct of this brother in respect of that transaction was then minutely examined, and he was acquitted most honourably. Mr. Kilham was then called on to name a third instance, when he mentioned a person who had been five years ago tried by the Conference, and, being adjudged censurable, was put back upon trial. Further instances being demanded, Mr. Kilham refused to bring any more charges, unless the Conference would indemnify him in respect of all consequences. The Conference then judged, "that no person has a right to bring public charges against individuals, or against a body of people, unless he be ready on proper occasion to substantiate these charges to the full, whatever might be the consequences."

Mr. Kilham then produced the copy of a letter written by Mr. Rodda to Mr. Mather, intimating some facts respecting some of the public money. It appeared to the Conference that this letter was unfairly obtained by one or more of Mr. Kilham's friends in Manchester, and still more unjustly communicated to him. The Conference, determined to sift this matter to the bottom, ordered the said letter to be read. Adam Clarke having read it, it was found that the fears of Mr. Rodda related to some eighteen guineas which Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore had received, belonging to the Book Room; to Mr. Rogers having detained the deed of the furniture of the chapel house; and to the circumstance that some of the Kingswood money was missing at the last Conference.

* "Minutes," p. 11.

The Conference then proceeded to examine whether the fears expressed in this letter were sufficiently grounded, and were perfectly convinced that there was no ground for them: and Mr. Kilham himself acknowledged that he was fully satisfied on the subject, and believed "that the money mentioned in this letter was not at all embezzled." *

The Conference then unanimously declared, "That Mr. Kilham has not proved this allegation, and is therefore highly criminal for bringing such a charge without proof."

The fifth article. The fifth article of this general charge was, that Mr. Kilham had accused the preachers of "(criminal) secrecy in transacting their business." The Conference inserted the word "criminal;" because, as they said, it would be absurd to charge men with being *guilty of secrecy*, if it had not been carried to a criminal extent. This charge rested on a passage taken from Mr. Kilham's "Trial," † which was read.

Mr. Kilham answered, "that by this 'secrecy' he

* "Minutes," p. 12.

† "'Trial,' p. 16: 'That there is secrecy in the disbursement of our collections is notorious. They are detailed this year more than formerly; but the Minutes do not give a fair statement of our expenditure, as I shall endeavour to point out. £334. 19*s*. 6*d*. for sickness, besides what the Circuits allow, appears to be an incredible sum. But the following sums are much beneath *par*: removal of families £176. 2*s*., expenses in travelling £286. 8*s*. 8*d*. If the book were fairly examined, where the monies are detailed, if I am not greatly mistaken, the two last sums would be near twice as much as those I have put down from the Minutes. For we frequently hear the preachers that have the chief management of our affairs declare, the expenses of travelling, and removing families, would be a thousand pounds or more for the past year. All our expenditure might be published in detail in four or five pages more than they now fill up. This would lead the people to examine their different Circuits, and prevent them from reflecting on us as they do at present. But while there is secresy in the very face of our Minutes, no sensible friend can be thoroughly satisfied.'"

meant only their not publishing the expenditure in detail."

The Conference then came to a unanimous resolution, that "Mr. Kilham is highly criminal in bringing in so heavy and dreadful a charge against the body of preachers, and especially against the senior brethren, in a public pamphlet, dispersed through the Connexion; and on his defence declaring that he meant their not publishing the expenditure in detail." *

The fourth charge, and the decision of Conference.

The fourth charge was, that "Mr. Kilham has published, in his various tracts, paragraphs highly derogatory to the character of Mr. Wesley." This charge was supported by passages taken from his "Progress of Liberty," "Bull," "Trial," and "Appeal." † When these paragraphs were

* "Minutes," p. 13.

† "1. 'Progress of Liberty,' p. 33: 'While Mr. Wesley lived, he acted according to his own will, in receiving many to travel in our Connexion. Many persons were brought from different Circuits, by the influence of individuals, who would never have been recommended by the people, where they had frequently preached. The local preachers, the trustees, leaders, and stewards, were amazed and grieved at their having *crept* among us in such a *dark unfair way*.'

"2. 'Bull,' p. 4: 'For a number of years, many of our most sensible and pious friends have complained of many evils which are found amongst us. They thought, after Mr. Wesley's death, we should immediately remove them.'

"3. 'Trial,' p. 9: 'I offered to produce in the District Meeting, if they would give me time, a number of passages from Mr. Wesley's Notes and Sermons (which are considered as the standard of Methodism) that are not consistent with the Scriptures, and the doctrines we profess as a people to believe.'

"4. 'Trial,' p. 32: 'It is an opinion with many, that the people ought to have been put in possession of their own privileges at the death of Mr. Wesley.'

"5. 'Appeal,' p. 1: 'When he (Mr. Wesley) was called to his reward, the preachers did not enter upon a particular examination of his plan, but took it up, and adopted his laws and rules as he left them. It cannot be

read, Mr. Kilham denied that they contained anything derogatory to Mr. Wesley. He is said to have supported this opinion by ten considerations. The first was, "Mr. Wesley never professed himself to be infallible;" and the others were so framed as to exhibit almost all the points at issue between Mr. Kilham and the Conference. It happened, however, that the whole body of preachers formed a different judgment: they resolved, "That Mr. Kilham has published, in his various tracts, paragraphs highly injurious to the character of our late venerable father in the Gospel, and therefore has been highly criminal herein." * It cannot be strictly said that this was unanimous, as one preacher dissented, wishing the words *highly blameable* to be inserted instead of *highly criminal.*

The fifth charge, and the judgment of the Conference respecting it.

The fifth charge stated that "Mr. Kilham is guilty of indecent and slanderous language." †

This charge was sustained by passages taken from the "Progress of Liberty," "Bull," "Trial," and "Appeal." ‡

supposed that Mr. Wesley, who travelled about four thousand miles every year, and preached so very often, would closely attend to a well organized form of church government for his people after his decease. When individuals began to examine different parts of our plan, they found several things in it both *unscriptural and oppressive* to the people.'"

* "Minutes," p. 14. † *Ibid.*, p. 15.

‡ "1. 'Progress of Liberty,' p. 19: 'We detest the conduct of persecuting Neros, and all the bloody actions of the great Whore of Babylon; and yet, in our measure, we tread in their steps.'

"2. 'Progress of Liberty,' p. 53: 'It (the present plan) will induce young women to do every thing that lays in their power to engage old men to marry them, that after their death they may have the benefit of the fund, and the advantage of *sprightly young husbands;* while an *old drone* that has palmed himself on Circuits, who received him as a *scourge from God,* will have abundance to live on when he is superannuated.'

"3. 'Bull,' p. 6: 'Begging by the Address (relating to the Preachers' Fund), which was drawn up long before the alteration of disbursement took

Mr. Kilham acknowledged that he had no facts on which to ground his supposition, that any assistant would be so base as to accept of a bribe to recommend a preacher to travel among us; that his expressions in the preceding passages were unjustifiable, and that he was sorry for them.

Discussion in the Conference on the whole case.

No other charge was preferred. The trial was thus continued to Tuesday evening. Monday was employed in preliminary business, and the whole of Tuesday in the examination of the above charges. On Wednesday the Conference opened at the usual hour, and the case was discussed until eleven o'clock, when Mr. Kilham was desired to withdraw. The remainder of the day was then employed, not in summing up the evidence against Mr. Kilham by a judge, as assumed in his "Life," but in a long

place, and not hinting to our friends the nature and design of our present rules, appears *Jesuitical;* and that we cannot proceed on this plan without acting the part of *whining, canting friars.* Among four hundred preachers it may lead some old men, who are badly received, to prolong their years of travelling. If an appeal were made to the whole Connexion, would it not be found that an individual or more, who may be considered as drones amongst us, are received as a scourge from *God,* by a great majority of the Societies where they labour?'

"4. 'Trial,' p. 41: 'That *Mr. Benson* and *many others* have no interest in recommending different persons to travel, cannot be called in question; but I have my doubts respecting several individuals. And I make no scruple in declaring, that should the present plan continue a few years more, I have no doubt but a man of a base character, for five or ten pounds, may prevail on *some* assistants to get him a place to travel amongst us. *God* forbid there should be many that would do this! The door is open, however; and unless it be speedily shut, this will probably be the case, if it has not been the case already.'

"5. 'Appeal,' p. 3: 'Before the pamphlet went to the press, I foresaw the storm that would be raised against me, by a number of the preachers. *Priestcraft* is the same in every sect and party. It loves to deal with *ignorance and credulity.* It *abhors the light,* and ever strives to keep its votaries from free inquiry.'"

conversation on the whole subject; a course not only proper in itself, but necessary to the preachers coming to a united judgment on the case. At five o'clock Mr. Kilham was called in, and the president intimated that the case had been decided on, and he was prepared to pass sentence of expulsion. At Mr. Kilham's earnest request, the charges against him were again read over, and the sentence delayed until the next day.

Sentence of expulsion pronounced on Mr. Kilham.

On Thursday at four o'clock Mr. Kilham again appeared, and, agreeably with the unanimous decision of the Conference, was thus addressed by the President: "Whereas Mr. Kilham has published to the world so many particulars so highly injurious to the characters of Mr. Wesley and the body of preachers, and declared himself able and willing to substantiate his charges before the Conference; and, notwithstanding, on his trial was not able to substantiate a single charge: the Conference, on the consideration of the whole body of evidence, together with the disunion, confusion, and distraction, which Mr. Kilham's pamphlets have made through the Societies, do unanimously judge Mr. Kilham unworthy of continuing a member of the Methodist Connexion; and therefore I now inform you, that you are no longer a member of it, but are expelled from the Connexion."

General observations on Mr. Kilham's objections, demands, and assertions.

Thus terminated this memorable exercise of ecclesiastical discipline. Mr. Kilham acknowledged, on the second day of the examination, that the Conference treated him with great respect; and at another time, that according to the nature of the court, to which he had from the beginning objected, the trial was as fair as it could be. After two of the preachers had prayed, the meeting was closed. This was on the 28th of July. The following days were employed in the routine business of the Conference.

On the 5th of August, about a week after his expulsion, Mr. Kilham addressed a letter to the president of the Conference; in which he professed a deep interest in the Connexion, stating that, if he had erred, it had been with a design to serve the Connexion at large; that he was no open or secret enemy to Methodism. He then went on to affirm that, if he had other views, he would cheerfully submit to their influence; and added, "It is probable, before another Conference, our views on these subjects may be the same." He closed this letter by asking if his expulsion from the ministry would prevent him from acting as a local preacher, and whether he was expelled from the Society.*

This letter was naturally regarded by the Conference as indicating some desire to return; and as the preachers felt anxious not to proceed to extreme measures, unless compelled by stern necessity, they appointed a committee to confer with Mr. Kilham, and report to the Conference. This committee consisted of Messrs. Mather, Pawson, Thompson, Bradburn, Benson, Bradford, and Moore. In conversation with this committee, he stated, "that Mr. Mather and Mr. Benson had said (in their pamphlet) that it was our general custom to act in the manner he desired; and that he only wished that general custom to be made law. The Rules of Pacification were then proposed to him, as introductory to a further explanation. His answer was, he thought many of them unscriptural, and he could not conform to them. The committee having reported this to the Conference, it was finally determined that he could have no place in our Connexion while he continued in his present opinions." †

* Kilham's Life, p. 286.

† Minutes of Conference, 8vo., vol. i., p. 347.

It has been thought necessary to go at length into this case, on account of its importance to the characters of the Methodist preachers of that day, and to the character of Methodism in all time. If the allegations of Mr. Kilham, and the assertions which still continue to be published by his friends and admirers, were strictly true, then Methodism was from the death of its founder, in respect of its preachers, principles, and policy, a foul, deceitful, and pernicious thing. The preceding evidence entirely rebuts these allegations, and shows, not that there were then no defects in the system,—for important alterations were made at the ensuing Conference,—but that it was honest and religious in its purpose, and straightforward and impartial in its policy.

But we shall be told, that Mr. Kilham objected to the constitution of the court by which he was tried, and would dissent entirely from this conclusion. To note for a moment his demur to the constitution of the court: What would be thought of a man who, having broken the law which he was bound to obey, claimed an exemption from the mode of trial which that law prescribes? Mr. Kilham and his friends are very fond of comparing, or contrasting, the conduct pursued towards him, with that which obtains in civil and criminal courts. But how many criminals would be found guilty, if each one was allowed to name one half of the jury by which he was to be tried? Yet this was exactly what Mr. Kilham demanded.* Nor can it be truly said, that the preachers were his judges, jury, and accusers. It was Mr. Kilham's boast that a great number of the preachers participated in his views, and it is certain that some did so; but in a house of one hundred and fifty Christian ministers, admitting that

* "Life of Kilham," p. 265.

there were a few biassed by prejudice on each side, there must have been a large majority whose dispassionateness and impartiality would be an ample guarantee of a righteous decision. Besides, Mr. Kilham had known for many years that his status as a Methodist preacher depended on the approval of his conduct by a majority of his brethren: if, therefore, so large a number of preachers could deliberately conspire to act unjustly and unrighteously toward him, what object or hope could he have in continued communion with them?

Yet we must confess there was in Mr. Kilham's character and conduct not only an earnestness, but an apparent honesty, which is truly wonderful. How coolly and confidently he makes the most monstrous assumptions, and utters the most reckless charges! He calls Mr. Wesley's laws unscriptural and oppressive; but he has never proved that his rival scheme of universal suffrage, representation, and lay delegation, is more scriptural. Yet he says so with the utmost confidence, and no doubt believed that he had made it clear as demonstration. So in regard of his statements, want of economy is swindling, want of detail in publishing accounts is criminal secrecy, and so on. This mode of procedure was the secret of Mr. Kilham's success, so far as he succeeded in disturbing the mind of the Connexion. Many read and believed, and the disproof came too late to save them. Indeed, Mr. Kilham was the genius of that which is now technically called "Methodist reform." He did everything likely to raise the people against the preachers, and to promote the universal-suffrage plan of church government. The absence of all proofs, and the quiet and easy manner in which he represented his views as axioms based on Scripture, and admitted by the universal concurrence of all Christians except Methodist

preachers, gave undeserved currency to his opinions. Nothing approaches to it, either before or since his day. Every agitator of the Connexion, from that time to the present, has succeeded just as he has copied Mr. Kilham. Nothing really new, either as to matter or manner, has since been brought forth. He was, in the full sense of the word, the first and only Methodist "reformer."

This event tested the stability of the Methodist people.

This very serious calamity—for such it undoubtedly was—served, however, in a remarkable way, to test the stability of Methodist institutions. Here were Societies formed in almost every principal town, and very generally in the villages, and among the rural population throughout the country. In each of these Societies the members were brought into brotherly intercourse with each other, weekly at least. They were familiarized with speaking to one another, and had mostly formed a habit of doing so with the utmost freedom. In those Societies there were men of more than ordinary ability and energy, called "leaders," who had the religious oversight of small companies of the people, and who generally acquired considerable influence over them. Besides these, there were local preachers and stewards; the former supplementing the labours of the regular preachers, mostly in the villages throughout the land: the latter were men generally of some standing and substance, who were charged with the funds of the respective Societies and Circuits. All these persons, private members and officers, met in their Lovefeasts and Society Meetings in free brotherly intercourse. The question which these circumstances raised was this: Had these Societies sufficient religious cohesion to save them from dislocation and ruin in any time of popular excitement? No portion of the population had such effective means of intercommunication; none could circulate among each other a knowledge of their

sympathies and aversions with equal effect. The case before us solved this important question. Notwithstanding the industry and ability of Mr. Kilham, although he had scattered his tracts by tens of thousands throughout the Connexion, and though his views were supported by active and influential friends in many of the large Societies, yet, when with three other preachers he inaugurated the New Connexion in 1797, how many members did they take with them from the old body? We cannot answer this question precisely; but we know that the numbers reported to the first New Connexion Conference of 1798 were 5,037, and they did not reach 6,000 for eight years afterward: while in 1796, the year of Mr. Kilham's expulsion, the numbers in the Methodist Societies in these islands were 95,226; in 1797, 99,519; in 1798, when the New Connexion held its first Conference, 101,682:—a plain proof that the Methodists of those days were not driven about with every wind of doctrine as to church polity, but were either satisfied with that system under which they had been brought to the knowledge of salvation, or had their minds too fully occupied with their spiritual interests to be affected by the din of controversy with which they were surrounded. If all the members who formed the original New Connexion Societies had been taken from the old body, they would only amount to about five *per cent.*

Happy results.

We gladly close our investigation into this painfully interesting chapter of Methodist history. Although we have occasionally been constrained to give an opinion on its successive phases, it has been our principal aim to place an amount of *data* before the reader sufficient to enable him to form his own decision on the act of Conference which separated Mr. Kilham finally from

the Connexion; and we shall be greatly disappointed if every candid Methodist do not come to the same conclusion as the loving and holy Joseph Entwisle, who, having witnessed the whole trial, declared, "Everything was done, I am sure, to save him; but in vain: such was his conduct, that I believe there was not one preacher but what saw the necessity of suspending him."

CHAPTER III.

THE DIFFICULTIES AND DISPUTES WHICH AROSE AFTER THE DEATH OF WESLEY RESPECTING THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CONNEXION, AND THE CHANGES TO WHICH THEY LED, UNTIL THE ADJUSTMENT OF METHODIST POLITY BY THE REGULATIONS OF 1797.

EFFECTS produced by the Death of Wesley—The Halifax Circular—Similar Meetings held at different Places—Meetings of Laymen—Disciplinary Discussions of the Conference of 1791—Groundless Charges preferred against the Conference—Disciplinary Action of the Conference of 1792—The Measures of Trustees and of the Conference of 1793—Minor District Meeting—Project for a Wesleyan Methodist Hierarchy—The Lichfield Meeting—The Conference of 1794, and the Trustees' Delegates—The Origin and Progress of the Contest between the Trustees and the Authority of the Conference at Bristol—Circular Letters connected with the Contest in Bristol—Deliberations and Decision of the District Meeting on the Bristol Disputes—Important Circular of Thomas Hanby and John Pawson—Other Documents—Increased Excitement spreads throughout the Connexion—Formidable Combination of Trustees—The Preachers and People generally determine to support the Rights of the Conference—Consultation and Arrangements for an Accommodation—The Conference of 1795—Division of Sentiment between the Trustee Delegates—They separate into two Sections—Termination of these Disputes by the disciplinary Part of the Plan of Pacification—Satisfaction of the Trustees with the Result—Renewal of Agitation—Mr. Pawson's Revision of the Large Minutes—Adopted by the Conference of 1797—Trustee Delegates assemble at Leeds during the Sittings of Conference—Discussions and Resolutions of the Delegates—Letter from Conference to the Delegates—Further Resolutions of Delegates, and Replies of Conference—Amicable Termination of these Disputes—Conclusion.

DURING his life, the founder of Methodism watched over the interests of all the Societies with unwearied assiduity.

Wherever advice or direction was needed, he was prepared to supply it. In any case of supposed or real delinquency, his piercing eye and sound judgment were soon at hand, accompanied with all the authority necessary to maintain the purity of the church, and to mete out righteous judgment to the offender.

Effects produced by the death of Wesley.

The removal of Wesley entirely deprived the Connexion of this very important and necessary authority; so that in the event of a preacher's delinquency, or any similar casualty, occurring soon after a Conference, there was no power to deal with the case for nearly twelve months. This state of things rendered some provision absolutely indispensable; and there seemed but two possible ways by which the want could be met:—either by investing some other senior preacher with power similar to that which Wesley had so long wielded; or by dividing the Connexion into districts, and authorizing the resident preachers to act as a Committee of Conference, with full powers in their several localities during the intervals of its assemblies.

The urgency of this want led to an earnest consideration of the best means of meeting it. Almost immediately after the founder of Methodism departed this life, circumstances arose which made the necessity apparent to the whole Connexion. Within four weeks from the day of Wesley's death, a circular letter was printed and sent through the Connexion, addressed "To the Methodist Preachers in general, and to the Conference and Assistants in particular." This circular was prepared at Halifax, by William Thompson, the assistant of that Circuit, John Pawson, assistant of Birstal, Robert Roberts of Burslem, John Allen of Bradford, Richard Rodda, Samuel Bradburn, and Thomas Tennant of Manchester, Thomas Hanby of Bolton, and Christopher Hopper. They appear to have met at Halifax,

The Halifax Circular.

in order to consider the state and wants of the Connexion. Their views are given in the letter to which we have referred, and which was addressed in the terms we have quoted above.*

In this paper, the difficulties of the case are fairly stated, and the possible means of meeting them canvassed. On the main question these preachers say: "There appear to us but two ways,—either to appoint another king in Israel, or to be governed by the Conference Plan, by forming ourselves into Committees. If you adopt the first, who is the man? What power is he to be invested with? And what revenue is he to be allowed? But this is incompatible with the Conference Deed. If the latter, we take the liberty to offer our thoughts upon the subject." They then proceed to recommend "filling up the vacant places in the Conference Deed, according to seniority; to choose a president, secretary, and stewards, for one year; appointing a person from year to year to hold a Conference in Ireland;" and "to appoint different Committees which will take in all the Circuits in the three kingdoms, to manage the affairs of their respective Districts, from one Conference to another," &c. A manner of supplying the vacancy occasioned by the death of Wesley was thus fairly propounded to the Connexion.

On the 13th of April following, Mr. Mather and Mr. Pawson visited Halifax, for the purpose of consultation with Mr. Thompson on these weighty subjects. They had a long interview, characterized by great brotherly freedom and confidence, and came to a thorough good understanding of each other's minds. They then agreed to invite Messrs. Allen, Booth, Parkin, Story, Wrigley, and James Wood, to meet them at Leeds, on Thursday, April 21st.

* See Appendix E, at the end of this volume.

These preachers accordingly met, and embodied the result of their deliberations in a series of resolutions, which they sent to all the "assistants" in the Connexion. These resolutions affirmed the principal recommendations of the "Halifax Circular," and went beyond them in suggesting some necessary arrangements respecting Ireland. On the 5th of May another such meeting was held, which was attended by Messrs. Cownley, Jos. Thompson, M. Lowes, John Gaulter, John Stamp, John Ogilvie, Furness, William Smith, Alexander Smith, Charles Atmore, and John Brettel.

Similar meetings held at different places.

In this manner the peculiar necessities of Methodism, and the suggestions of the "Halifax Circular" for meeting them, were discussed throughout the country. The preachers in and about Bristol met on the 11th of May, those of Carmarthen on the 12th, and adopted kindred resolutions. Meanwhile, Adam Clarke and other leading preachers in Dublin met, and expressed themselves in nearly similar terms. Whilst, however, the preachers, in consultation with a few of the leading members, were thus considering what the exigency of the case required, and how it could be best met; many leaders and other official persons thought they had an interest in the questions at issue, and should also consult together and make known their opinions. Several such meetings were held: the most notable of which was that at Redruth, in Cornwall, where above fifty of the leading laymen of the county assembled on June 14th. Minutes of this meeting were printed, and a copy ordered to be sent to every preacher. From one of these now before us,* we learn that the members of this meeting seemed to think that it lay entirely with them to arrange the whole polity of the body. All that the preachers at Halifax and elsewhere had aimed at

Meetings of laymen.

* See Appendix F, at the end of this volume.

was to supply a new and pressing want—to fill up a sudden *hiatus*—in the administration of affairs, arising out of the death of Wesley. They never thought of altering any existing rule, or interfering with any custom or right. These laymen, on the contrary, wished to make such changes as, whether they were aware of it or not, would have had the effect of revolutionizing Methodism. They accordingly passed a series of resolutions, to the following effect:—1. That the members of every class shall choose their leader. 2. That the people in every Society shall choose their Society stewards. 3. That no preacher shall admit into or expel from any Society without the consent of a majority of such Society. 4. That the (Society) stewards in Quarterly Meeting shall choose the Circuit stewards. 5. That there shall be no division of Circuits without the consent of a majority of the stewards in a Quarterly Meeting. 6. That no person be recommended to travel without a certificate from the stewards in Quarterly Meeting. 7. That if any preacher be charged with impropriety of conduct, or deficiency of ability, the Circuit stewards shall convene the stewards, and select from them an equal number to the preachers present; and that these shall form a court by which the case shall be heard and decided. And, lastly, the parties pledged themselves to support the itinerant plan, and cheerfully to contribute their proportion toward its expenses. To these resolutions were added the following proposals:—1. That every preacher coming from a distant Circuit shall bring a certificate of his good conduct from a majority of the stewards in Quarterly Meeting. 2. That all the preachers in Full Connexion shall have an equal position with the legal Hundred, except in respect of chapel cases: and in addition they expressed high disapproval of the proposal for dividing the Connexion into Districts.

On the other hand, the trustees, leaders, stewards, and leading members of the Society in Birmingham met, and issued a circular to the several Circuits in the Connexion, in which, after deploring the removal of the venerable founder of the Methodist Societies, they suggest that it is the duty and wisdom of the Methodists in general to adhere to the doctrine and discipline of their late revered pastor. In fact, they protest against the introduction of any change, either in the polity of the body, or in its relation to the Church of England. The preachers on the Circuit further attest that the trustees, leaders, and stewards of the Societies in Dudley, Wednesbury, Darlaston, and Tipton, are on these subjects in perfect accord with the brethren in Birmingham.

These cases will sufficiently indicate the state of the several Societies, when the Conference of 1791 assembled for the transaction of the regular business of the Connexion. Its first act was to place Mr. Thompson, the principal mover in the "Halifax Circular," in the chair, as the first president after Wesley,—with Dr. Coke as secretary. The Conference then caused the letter which Wesley had written in April, 1785, and which was handed to them by Mr. Bradford, to be read; and, having ordered it to be inserted in their Minutes, they immediately, and with one accord, resolved to comply with its request. The following minute was accordingly entered:—"The Conference have unanimously resolved, that all the preachers who are in Full Connexion with them, shall enjoy every privilege that the members of the Conference enjoy, agreeably to the above-written letter of our venerable deceased father in the Gospel."

Having considered the stations of the preachers and other routine business, this assembly proceeded, in general

conformity with the suggestions of the Halifax Circular, to make arrangements to supply the vacancy occasioned by the death of Wesley in the general oversight and direction of the affairs of the body during the intervals of the Conference. This subject was introduced by the question,—

Disciplinary discussions of the Conference of 1791.

"*Q.* What regulations are necessary for the preservation of our whole economy as the Rev. Mr. Wesley left it?

"*A.* Let the three kingdoms be divided into Districts: England into nineteen Districts; Scotland into two; and Ireland into six; as follows:—1. London, Sussex, Colchester, Rochester, Canterbury, Bedford, Oxford. 2. Norwich, Diss, Lynn, Bury, Wells. 3. Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, Northampton. 4. Sarum, Portsmouth. 5. Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney. 6. Redruth, St. Austle, Penzance. 7. Plymouth, Bideford, Tiverton. 8. Bristol, Taunton, Shepton-Mallet, Bath, Gloucester. 9. Pembroke, Glamorgan, Brecon. 10. Birmingham, Worcester, Wolverhampton. 11. Manchester, Stockport, Oldham, Bolton, Liverpool, Blackburn. 12. Chester, Macclesfield, Burslem. 13. Halifax, Colne, Keighley, Bradford, Huddersfield. 14. Leeds, Sheffield, Wakefield, Birstal, Dewsbury, Otley. 15. York, Hull, Pocklington, Bridlington, Scarborough. 16. Grimsby, Horncastle, Epworth, Gainsborough. 17. Whitby, Yarm, Thirsk, Barnard Castle. 18. Whitehaven, Isle of Man. 19. Newcastle, Sunderland, Hexham, Alnwick. 20. Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dumfries, Kelso. 21. Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness. 22. Dublin, Wicklow, Carlow, Longford. 23. Cork, Bandon, Limerick, Waterford. 24. Athlone, Birr, Castlebar, Sligo. 25. Clones, Cavan, Ballyconnell, Inniskillen, Brookborough. 26. Londonderry, Coleraine, Lisleen, Ballyshannon, Omagh. 27. Charlemont, Tanderagee,

Newry, Downpatrick, Lisburn, Belfast." These were the first Methodist Districts.

It was then asked, "What directions are necessary concerning the management of the Districts?" To which this answer was given: "The assistant of a Circuit shall have authority to summon the preachers of his District who are in Full Connexion, on any critical case, which, according to the best of his judgment, merits such an interference. And the said preachers, or as many of them as can attend, shall assemble at the time and place appointed by the assistant aforesaid, and shall form a Committee, for the purpose of determining concerning the business on which they are called. They shall choose a chairman for the occasion; and their decision shall be final till the meeting of the next Conference, when the chairman of the Committee shall lay the minutes of their proceedings before the Conference. Provided, nevertheless, that nothing shall be done by any Committee contrary to the resolutions of the Conference." * It was further asked, "Is it necessary to enter into any engagements in respect to our future plan of economy? *A.* We engage to follow strictly the plan which Mr. Wesley left us at his death." The appointment of Dr. Coke to be president of the ensuing Irish Conference further elicited the judgment of the general Conference respecting the authority and action of these District Committees. In connexion with that appointment, the following question and answer were placed on the minutes: "*Q.* Are any directions necessary concerning the preceding minute? *A.* No letters of complaint, or on Circuit business, shall be written to England on account of this appointment. The Committees of the Districts shall determine all appeals whatsoever during the

* Minutes, vol. i., p. 241.

intervals of the Conference; and therefore all applications on Society business during the said intervals, which cannot be determined by the assistants of the Circuits, shall be made to the Committees only." *

Groundless charges preferred against the Conference.

This was the first action of the Conference after the death of Wesley in respect of Methodist polity; and for this, the preachers have been denounced as selfish, ambitious, and grasping at power, for the purpose of tyrannizing over the people, and depriving them of their reasonable and scriptural rights. For these accusations there are certainly no grounds whatever.

It might be urged, with some show of reason, that the laity of Methodism at this time were not in the full possession of those privileges to which every member of a mature and complete Christian church has an undoubted right; but this does not sustain the foul charge to which reference has just been made. Both preachers and people in Methodism, before the death of Wesley, were certainly held in a kind of minority; whilst he exercised such a measure of power as could only have been obtained and wielded by a man so extraordinary in zeal, labours, designation, and success, as himself. To the preachers he had bequeathed, by the Deed of Declaration, his power, after having gradually trained them to exercise it in conjunction with himself; and it was unquestionably not only their interest, but their duty, to use this bequest so as to conserve, perpetuate, and extend the work of God with which they stood connected. They did this with consummate tact and judgment, by the simple measures which have been detailed. The death of Wesley had made no alteration in the state and privileges of the people. But it had deprived the preachers of a means of superintendence and

* Minutes, vol. i., p. 246.

oversight which was essential to the working of the system. The appointment of Districts and District Committees, with full power during the intervals of the Conferences, met this want, and supplied the means by which the whole Connexion was enabled to hold on its way, and quietly and carefully to ascertain whether any, and what further, emendations were necessary in order to remove every just cause of complaint, and to enable preachers and people to carry on the great work of God with unity of purpose and harmony of action.

Nothing, then, can be more unfair than to condemn this conduct of the Conference as unscriptural and unjust; nothing more uncritical or more unphilosophic, under the actual circumstances of the case, than to laud the resolutions of the Cornish delegates as containing enlightened, liberal, and righteous demands, which ought to have been conceded. We believe, on the contrary, and shall be prepared by and bye to prove, that if the Conference had adopted such a basis for their polity, they would have made it unscriptural, and have denuded it of its greatest glory and power. The Conference was undoubtedly right in taking up the whole Methodist economy as Wesley left it, and following on in his spirit, correcting what they found to be wrong, and supplying what was discovered to be deficient, until, by a vigilant observance of God's providential guidance and blessing, they were enabled to place the Connexion before the world as a great and influential section of Christ's universal church.

Another important arrangement was made at the Conference of 1791, which merits special notice. It was resolved, "1. The Committee of every District in England and Scotland shall elect one of their body to form a Committee to draw up a plan for the stationing of the preachers

in Great Britain; which Committee shall meet at the place where the Conference is held, three days in the week preceding the Conference, in order to draw up the above-mentioned plan. 2. The Committee of every District in Ireland shall send one of their body to meet the delegate two days before the Irish Conference for the same purpose." * This was the origin of the Stationing Committee, which has been of essential and permanent use in the operations of Methodism.

Disciplinary action of the Conference of 1792.

At the Conference of 1792, the following emendations and additions were made respecting the operation of the District Committees:—"*Q.* What further regulations shall be made concerning the management of the Districts? *A.* 1. All the preachers of every District respectively, who shall be present at the Conference from time to time, shall meet together as soon as possible after the stations of the preachers are finally settled, and choose a chairman for their District out of the present or absent members of the District Committee. 2. The chairman so chosen shall have authority to call a meeting of the Committee of his District, on any application of the preachers or people which appears to him to require it. But he must never individually interfere with any other Circuit but his own. 3. Whenever a chairman has received any complaint against a preacher, either from the preachers or the people, he shall send an exact account of the complaint in writing to the person accused, with the name of the accuser or accusers, before he calls a meeting of the District Committee to examine into the charge. 4. If it appear on just grounds to any superintendent, that the chairman of his District has been guilty of any crime or misdemeanour, or that he has neglected to call a meeting of the District

* Minutes, vol. i., p. 248.

Committee, when there were sufficient reasons for calling it, such superintendent shall have authority in that case to call a meeting of the District Committee, and to fix the time and place of meeting. The Committee thus assembled shall have power, if they judge necessary, to try the chairman; and, if found guilty, to suspend him from being a travelling preacher till the ensuing Conference, or to remove him from the office of a superintendent, or to depose him from the chair, and to elect another in his place."*

By these arrangements, means were provided, by which, on the complaint of either preachers or people, any preacher might be placed on his trial, and, if found guilty of improper conduct, be suspended, or otherwise dealt with, as the case might seem to require, until the ensuing Conference.

These matters, however, were not at this time greatly regarded. The question of the sacraments was the question of the day, and absorbed almost every other in the estimation of the Methodist public. Intensity was given to this feeling about this time by the announcement of the fact, that some of the preachers who had been ordained by Wesley had been uniting to ordain others; so that there were growing up in the Connexion two classes of ministers, some ordained, and others unordained. The evil consequences of this practice were perceived by many preachers, and by some of the people. Several of the former, who had assisted in the ordination of some of their brethren, afterward deplored it as a great error. The people also in many places entered into this feeling, and expressed themselves very strongly against the practice. Among others, the leading friends at Leeds had met just on the eve of this Conference, and drawn up a petition

* Minutes, vol. i., p. 259.

to the preachers on this subject. They say in this document, "We have heard, with painful concern, that some of the preachers in our Connexion have violated the Resolutions of the last Conference, by ordaining, or assisting in the ordination of, their brethren, and administering the ordinances; which has caused great animosities among the people, to the hindering of the work of God, and the destruction of brotherly love. Such conduct we deeply lament, and consider as highly reprehensible, and greatly prejudicial to that glorious work in which we are all engaged. We are persuaded that, if the same steps should be taken here, similar or even worse consequences would ensue. We therefore most earnestly entreat, that no ordained preachers, so called, (who have taken the steps above-mentioned,) may be appointed for our Circuit, unless they solemnly engage to desist from all pretensions to superiority over their brethren, confess their fault, and publicly declare their determination to return to, and uprightly abide by, the excellent plan of ancient Methodism, which the Almighty in His wisdom and mercy has been pleased so universally to bless."

The Conference, being thus urged, carefully considered the subject, and we accordingly find the following on the Minutes:—"*Q.* What rules shall be made concerning ordinations? *A.* 1. No ordination shall take place in the Methodist Connexion without the consent of the Conference first obtained. 2. If any brother shall break the above-mentioned rule, by ordaining, or being ordained, without the consent of the Conference previously obtained, the brother so breaking the rule does thereby exclude himself."* This stringent regulation appears to have removed this cause of disquiet and irritation.

* Minutes, vol. i., p. 259.

The measures of trustees and of the Conference of 1793.

Still the question respecting the sacraments agitated the Societies. As the year passed on, (1792–3,) it became certain that their entire prohibition could not be maintained; and several of the leading preachers on both sides, aware of this fact, met in consultation for the purpose of devising some plan for meeting the difficulty of the case. A knowledge of these proceedings greatly irritated several of the trustees in different places, who were anxious to maintain the "Old Plan," and keep the Societies in union with the Church. Under this influence, those of the Broadmead and Guinea Street chapels in Bristol, and of the New Chapel, London, put forth a printed letter to the Conference, in which they accused the preachers of "a departure from the original plan of Methodism," with a design to make the Societies "separate churches," and to consummate the whole with disloyalty to the crown.

The Conference thought this document of sufficient importance to be answered in a separate circular letter, which was printed with the Minutes of the year. A letter had been previously issued respecting the administration of the sacraments; but the one now referred to was directed to the refutation of the slanderous imputations conveyed in the trustees' circular; and this purpose was fulfilled with remarkable force, temper, and Christian feeling.

Minor District Meeting.

At this Conference a further arrangement was made for the settlement of any dispute on the trial of an accused preacher, when the case might scarcely be of sufficient public importance to call together all the preachers in a District. To meet such cases it was resolved: "1. If any preacher be accused of immorality, the preacher accused and his accuser shall respectively choose two preachers of their District, and the chairman of the District shall, with the four preachers chosen as above, try the accused preacher; and they shall

have authority, if he be found guilty, to suspend him till the ensuing Conference, if they judge it expedient. 2. If there be any difference between the preachers in a District, the respective parties shall choose two preachers; and the chairman of the District, with the four preachers so chosen, shall be final arbiters to determine the matters in dispute."*

While the Conference was thus endeavouring to meet and to reconcile the conflicting wishes of the people with respect to the sacraments, and to consolidate the polity of the Connexion, other elements of discord were introduced, which still more powerfully shook the Connexion to its centre, and spread distrust and disaffection far and wide among the Societies. Long before the Conference of 1793 Mr. Kilham had put forth a sheet, which was extensively circulated amongst the influential members of the body, under the signatures of "Trueman and Freeman," in which he earnestly and strongly contended for the introduction of lay members into the District Meetings and into the Conference, as well as for the election of leaders by their classes, and the right of placing a preacher on his trial at any Quarterly Meeting; with other proposals of a similar character. Such suggestions, acting on the excited temper of the Connexion at that period, could not but produce a great effect. Those of the people who desired the administration of the sacraments, and those who deprecated their introduction, saw in these proposals means by which their individual arguments and energy might be brought to bear on the object of their desires. So that dissatisfaction with the existing institutions of Methodism, and desires for extensive and radical changes, were increased to a very serious extent.

But, while this mischievous influence was gradually

* Minutes, vol. i., p. 277.

sapping the foundation of all established rule and order, an opposite evil, scarcely less dangerous in its character, was assailing the highest classes of the Methodist ministry. The senior preachers at the time of Wesley's death had been trained up in entire disrelish for Presbyterianism; all their partialities and prejudices were in favour of an episcopal form of church government. This being the case, when their head, who had always acted as their archbishop, was at length removed, it cannot be matter of surprise that they should feel as if all real legitimate authority had ceased among them. Neither the Conference as a whole, nor the District Committees, had as yet earned general confidence in the exercise of actual ruling authority. Hence we find Mr. Pawson, while president of the Conference, in December, 1793, writing thus:—"At present we really have no government." Under a conviction of this want, a plan was devised for remodelling the constitution of Methodism, and introducing a kind of hierarchy, which was to consist of three orders of ministers,—superintendents, elders, and deacons. This plan is attributed to Dr. Coke, who, when he had matured it, is said to have made it known to a select number of the senior preachers. Mr. Pawson took a very active part in these negotiations, and on the 13th of December, 1793, wrote thus respecting it to his friend Atmore: "It will by no means answer our ends to dispute one with another, as to which is the most scriptural form of church government. We should consider our present circumstances, and endeavour to agree upon some method by which our people may have the ordinances of God, and at the same time be preserved from division. I care not a rush whether it be Episcopal or Presbyterian. I believe neither of them to be purely scriptural: but our preachers and people in general are prejudiced against the

Project for a Wesleyan Methodist hierarchy.

latter; consequently, if the former will answer our end, we ought to embrace it. Indeed, I believe it will suit our present plan far better than the other. The design of Mr. Wesley will weigh much with many; which now evidently appears to have been this:—He foresaw that the Methodists would, after his death, soon become a distinct people. He was deeply prejudiced against a Presbyterian, and was as much in favour of an Episcopal, form of government. In order, therefore, to preserve all that was valuable in the Church of England among the Methodists, he ordained Mr. Mather and Dr. Coke bishops. These he undoubtedly designed should ordain others. Mr. Mather told us so at the Manchester Conference; but we did not then understand him. I see no way of coming to any good settlement but on the plan I mentioned before. I sincerely wish that Dr. Coke and Mr. Mather may be allowed to be what they are, bishops; that they ordain two others chosen by the Conference; that these four have the government of the Connexion placed in their hands for one year, each superintending his respective District, being stationed in London, Bristol, Leeds, and Newcastle. We can give what degree of power we please; but I would not cramp them. If any should abuse the power given, woe be to them! They would not be intrusted with it again! And even supposing these four had authority to station the preachers, who would have any cause to fear? We must have ordination among us at any rate." *

These were the views which obtained amongst some of the most liberal and enlightened Methodist preachers of that day; and, having settled the preliminaries, they proposed to have a private conference, when the subject might be fully discussed. At first Birmingham

* MS. letter.

was thought of, and afterwards, by an unaccountable obliquity of vision, Lichfield was selected. The reason for this choice was, that Methodism had not then been introduced into that city. As if eight or ten Methodist preachers meeting at an inn, in a town where Methodism had no standing, were likely to pass unnoticed! However, at the appointed time, Dr. Coke, A. Mather, T. Taylor, J. Pawson, S. Bradburn, J. Rogers, H. Moore, and Adam Clarke, met at an hotel in Lichfield, and entered upon the discussion of these important matters. Dr. Coke opened the business by speaking of the unhappy differences which existed in England respecting the administration of the sacraments in Methodist chapels, and urged that in the estimation of many persons this difference of opinion was greatly aggravated by the want of regular ordination, by the imposition of hands, to the pastoral office. He then went on to state the entire absence of all these evils among the Methodists in America, which he believed arose from the system of church government which had been given them by Wesley. After this preamble, the doctor proposed that, as he had himself been ordained by the imposition of hands for the full pastoral office in America, he by virtue of his office as superintendent should confer the office of presbyter on those brethren present who had not been ordained; which step, he believed, would be agreeable to the Societies at large; and that they, being thus empowered, would be able to administer the holy sacraments. The subject, having been thus opened, was discussed by the preachers present, most of whom expressed their satisfaction with the proposed plan. When, however, it came to Mr. Moore's turn to speak, although he approved of the proposed measures substantially as suitable arrangements for the government of any

The Lichfield meeting.

Christian church, yet he contended that as Methodist preachers they could take no step affecting the interests of Methodism without first consulting the Conference, regarding it, as they did, as their supreme court. He therefore concluded by moving, "That the subject stand over till the ensuing Conference." Mr. Mather followed on the same side, and denounced any intermediate action, in the way of ordination, as decidedly "unmethodistical and wrong."

Yet, notwithstanding this difference of opinion as to the propriety of any immediate action, all the parties appear to have concurred in the adoption of certain resolutions which were signed by the persons present at the meeting, and which they agreed to submit to the next Conference. We give at length in the Appendix a carefully revised transcript of these resolutions, from a copy in the handwriting of Dr. Clarke, who acted as secretary to the meeting.*

The Conference of 1794, and the trustees' delegates.

As the Conference of 1794 drew near, the excitement and anxiety in the Connexion greatly increased. The Trustees as a body now came prominently forward as representing the interests of the people, and claimed not only a *veto* on the administration of the sacraments in the chapels, but a larger measure of influence and power in the direction of the affairs of the Connexion. For the purpose of asserting and maintaining these claims, a delegation of trustees met at Bristol, and on the opening of the Conference presented an address to that body. It complained of the divided state of the Societies, and of proposals for some new code of law, and form of government, concocted by the Lichfield meeting. It recommended that some plan should be adopted which would put an end to disturbances; that some security

* See Appendix G, at the end of this volume.

be given for the fulfilment of the declarations of Conference with regard to the ordinances; that the preachers lay aside all ecclesiastical titles, administering the sacrament, ordination, &c.; and that they divide the spiritual and temporal affairs of the body between the preachers and themselves. The trustees concluded by declaring their deep concern for the prosperity of the work, and their attachment to the preachers. This address was seriously and patiently considered by the Conference, and a strong disposition was evinced to adopt a course which would restore peace to the Connexion. But the difficult question remained, How was this to be done? The trustees, although appearing to represent the laity, were asking for a prohibition of what thousands of the most pious and influential members of Society throughout the country demanded as their undoubted Christian right. They, in fact, represented what may be called the High-Church lay aristocracy of Methodism, and must be carefully distinguished both from the people in general, and from the democratic party of Mr. Kilham in particular. These gentleman wished, in virtue of their position as trustees, equally to rule over the preachers and the laity at large. Nor did the attempt appear very strange; for they were exceedingly powerful, as representing the wealth and worldly respectability of Methodism. In this difficulty, Mr. Benson moved, "That the Conference do confirm and ratify the declaration of last year respecting the sacrament." But on Wednesday Mr. Mather read a letter, which he submitted to the Conference as an answer to the trustees. This, as approved, was sent; and on the following Saturday an answer was returned, in which the trustees still earnestly requested "that ordination, the administering of the sacraments, burying the dead, &c., be laid aside." A committee was

then appointed to communicate with the trustees, for the purpose, if possible, of effecting a reconciliation.

Meanwhile, the resolutions of the Lichfield meeting were introduced into the Conference, discussed, and speedily rejected, "as tending to create invidious and unhallowed distinctions among brethren." The Conference on this occasion again affirmed the principle, which it adopted from the argument of Mr. Benson, at the first Conference after Wesley's death; namely, that imposition of hands was not essential to ordination, but merely a circumstance, although generally a suitable and significant one; the act of admission into the ministry, so as to be devoted wholly to it, and to exercise the pastoral charge, being the true scriptural ordination, both to preach the word, and to administer the sacraments.

This Conference appears to have done its utmost to meet the wishes of the assembled trustees. For this purpose, it made considerable concessions. These were published in a circular to the Societies under the signatures of the president and secretary, dated "August 8th, 1794." This we have transcribed at length.* It re-enacted the rule of the preceding Conference against ecclesiastical titles, gowns, bands, &c. Preaching in church hours was prohibited, except in very special cases. The Lord's Supper was not to be administered in future, where the union and concord of the Society could be maintained without it; and preachers were not to baptize, except for the desirable ends of love and harmony. Then it was decreed, that the temporal and spiritual affairs of the Societies "shall be separated as far as the purposes of peace and harmony can be answered thereby;" the temporal affairs being confided to the stewards, who are required to keep proper

* See Appendix II, at the end of this volume.

books of account for sums received and disbursed for their respective Societies; while the spiritual concerns shall be managed by the preachers, "who have ever appointed leaders, chosen stewards, and admitted members, and expelled them from the Society, consulting their brethren the stewards and leaders." With respect to chapel affairs, it was decided that the trustees, with the assistant preacher, who shall have one vote only, shall choose their own stewards, and transact all the pecuniary business pertaining to their respective chapel trusts. It was also further decided, that "no trustee, however accused, shall be removed from the Society, unless his crime or breach of the rules of the Society be proved in the presence of the trustees and leaders." And further, that "if any preacher be accused of immorality, a meeting shall be called of all the preachers, trustees, stewards, and leaders of the Circuit in which the accused preacher labours; and if the charge be proved to the satisfaction of the majority of such meeting, the chairman of the District in which that preacher is situated shall remove the convicted preacher from the Circuit, on the request of the majority of the meeting: nevertheless, an appeal on either side to the Conference shall remain."

Besides these conciliatory arrangements, measures were taken which, it was believed, would promote peace and concord throughout the Connexion, and especially at Bristol. The names of all the chapels to which leave had been given for the administration of the sacraments were printed in the Minutes; and amongst these were Portland chapel, Kingswood, Marsh, and Shays or Winterburne, in the Bristol Circuit. Mr. Vasey was appointed to Bristol to administer the sacraments, with Mr. Moore to assist him at Portland.

The origin and progress of the contest between the trustees and the authority of the Conference at Bristol.

But all these hopes were vain. As stated in a previous chapter, the trustees of the Old Chapel in Bristol were very indignant at the ascendancy which seemed to crown the desire for the introduction of the sacraments into the Methodist chapels. They saw on these "Minutes" more than ninety places enrolled, to which this privilege was accorded by the consent of the Conference. In the hope of checking this progress, they took the decisive step which placed them and the Conference in direct collision.

Such is the aspect in which we at present regard this case. Its bearing on the sacramental question has been already shown. Here, we consider, was a struggle on the part of the trustees to wrest, in an improper manner, power from the Conference. Considered as the act of a single body of trustees, this expulsion of a preacher from a chapel to which he had been formally appointed by the Conference, was calculated to excite great alarm in the mind of every one who wished for the perpetuation of Methodism and of its itinerant ministry. But it becomes a much more serious matter, when we are told by well-informed persons, who had every means of knowing the case fully, that it was evident "there was a combination of trustees formed against the liberty and independence of the preachers."* All the circumstances of the case sustain this judgment as to the actual combination of the trustees. They saw that the legal operation of the Deed of Declaration gave the Conference the appointment of the preachers to Methodist pulpits; and that this power really conferred supreme jurisdiction in all Methodist affairs. This the trustees were by no means prepared to admit and endure, especially as the Conference, after withstanding much importunity, had at length shown a disposition to meet the wishes of the people to

* Rev. Jonathan Crowther's "Truth and Matter of Fact," p. 5. 1794.

a moderate extent, by allowing the Lord's Supper to be administered in chapels where the Societies urgently required it. Determined to resist this concession to the utmost, the trustees combined for the purpose of wresting, at least, a part of this power from the preachers, by securing a veto on the occupancy of certain chapels, whose trust-deeds were loosely drawn. Bristol was selected as a place for the struggle, and with good reason. The Deeds of the Room, and Guinea Street chapel, had not been prepared agreeably to Wesley's wishes: he had endeavoured to rectify what was amiss, but had always been thwarted. Here too the trustees, who were intensely opposed to the administration of the sacraments, hoped that great numbers amongst the people would heartily support them in their new course.

Under such circumstances, the legal notice was served on Mr. Moore. Mr. Benson had been appointed the superintendent of the Circuit, with Mr. Rodda, Mr. Vasey, and Mr. Moore. Mr. Vasey was appointed because, being a clergyman, he would be able to administer the sacraments without offending the prejudices of any. All these preachers, with the exception of Mr. Moore, were known to hold views respecting the administration of the sacraments very similar to those entertained by the trustees: their support was accordingly counted on in the struggle; and the presumption was well founded; for, on the expulsion of Mr. Moore from the Old Room, we do not hear of any protest from Mr. Benson, as the superintendent, against this arbitrary conduct of the trustees; nor that he and the other preachers objected to preach in these chapels until Mr. Moore was also allowed to do so. Some measure of this sort might have been expected, and might have put down the schism. Nothing of the kind took place. On the

contrary, Messrs. Benson, Rodda, and Vasey continued in harmonious operation with the trustees, preached regularly in their chapels, and, as far as they could do so, conducted the affairs of the Circuit as if nothing unusual had taken place.

But if the trustees in this contest counted largely on the support of the people, they were greatly mistaken. The great majority of the Society and congregation immediately abandoned the chapels, and concerted measures for providing a suitable place of worship in the neighbourhood. Nor was Mr. Moore forsaken by his brethren. Dr. Coke came to Bristol to concert measures for the preservation of the bulk of the Society, who had, as mentioned above, left the Room and Guinea Street chapel. Mr. Moore was also assisted by Mr. Jonathan Crowther, who had been appointed by the last Conference to the West Indies, but was unable to proceed to his appointment, as no convoy for that destination had been prepared. Mr. Crowther, being, in consequence, at liberty to employ himself somewhere in this country, and believing Mr. Moore to be engaged in a contest "for the whole Methodist Connexion," joined him, and laboured to support the cause in which he was engaged. So that there were in Bristol, Messrs. Benson, Rodda, and Vasey, preaching in the chapels over which the trustees claimed absolute power, and in the other places where they were received; and Dr. Coke, with Messrs. Moore and Crowther, having their head-quarters at Portland Street, ministering there and in other places through the Circuit principally to those who were opposed to the conduct of the trustees, and who wished to maintain the right of the Conference to appoint preachers to all Methodist pulpits. The eyes of the whole Connexion were turned to the place, and fixed on the per-

sons engaged in this struggle; and their sympathies drawn out towards the one party or the other, according to the respective views and opinions of individual observers. The progress and result of this contest will be best seen by a reference to the several circulars and documents which were issued by these parties and their adherents and sympathizers throughout the country.

Circular letters connected with the contest in Bristol.

Mr. Moore thought it necessary to place the true state of the case before the Connexion. Accordingly, a circular was issued, bearing date "August 18th," which set forth the principal facts already given, and stated "that on the 12th, the day following that on which he was expelled from the chapel, he attended the regular Leaders' Meeting, the trustees also being present: when, after the regular business, Mr. Moore observed that, as the Leaders' Meeting was the proper place to bring forward any accusation against a preacher, he desired to know whether any person had a charge to prefer against him. After a long silence, one of the trustees said, 'Sir, we have a legal right to appoint preachers for these chapels. We have appointed three, and we do not choose to appoint a fourth.' Mr. Moore replied, that 'if they acted as men separated from and independent of the Methodist Connexion, the answer was proper; but, if they professed themselves members of it, their answer was altogether improper, for it tended to the total overthrow of Methodism.' He therefore again asked whether they had any charge to prefer against him. A total silence was the only answer to this. It therefore appeared to all assembled, that the only cause of this violent measure, equally injurious to the Conference, the stewards, leaders, people, and Mr. Moore, was his assisting in the administration of the Lord's Supper, at Portland chapel, the Sunday before."

The circular then goes on to show that Wesley, during his life, felt most anxious to correct the anomalous character of the Bristol Deed, and that he at one time obtained a promise from the trustees that it should be altered, which he thus recorded in his Journal: "Monday the 14th," (September, 1788,) "I returned to Bristol; Saturday the 20th, I met the trustees for the new room, who were all willing to add a codicil to the Deed of Trust, in order to ascertain to the Conference (after me) the sole right of appointing the preachers in it."

"This agreement," the document proceeds, "they never would fulfil, which exceedingly pained our venerable father; and we feel the afflicting consequences. Not content with enjoying *their own* Christian privileges and trust rights in their fullest extent, without any restraint or molestation whatsoever; they have invaded ours, and have expelled from their houses a member of the Conference, (against whom they could bring no shadow of complaint,) merely because he assisted in the administration of a sacred ordinance, with respect to which human compulsion is an abomination."

This circular concludes with these words:—"We have also to praise the Lord on another account. We have gotten by a remarkable providence a large piece of ground, within a small distance of the room in the Horsefair; and, as the people are all zealous in this important matter, we trust to have a chapel soon erected, (we hope also soon to have another in the neighbourhood of Guinea Street,) such as Bristol has not known in our Connexion. And as we honour the memory of our late father, (as well as his sons in the Gospel,) it shall be settled in that way which was recommended by him, so that no member of your body

shall ever be expelled from it, merely because it is the pleasure of a few oppressive men."

This document was signed by nine trustees and stewards, and by the leaders of forty-four classes out of fifty-two of which the Bristol Society was composed; and countersigned by Thomas Coke, Samuel Bradburn, Thomas Rutherford, and Richard Elliott, who appended the following to the circular before they signed their names: "We the undersigned, some of whom were eye-witnesses to the facts above stated, and all of whom have strictly inquired into the whole of the proceedings, are perfectly satisfied with the above statement. We were all present at the meeting of the whole Society, in which that statement was read and signed, and know that it expresses the mind of the people."

This printed document, as stated above, bears date "August 18th," only a very few days after the termination of the Conference. The copy now before us has on the fly-leaf an autograph note in the handwriting of Dr. Coke, dated a week later, and signed by himself, H. Moore, and T. Rutherford. In this note, referring to the allusion in the circular to the erection of a chapel, he says, "Last Tuesday we began to build, and shall have a noble chapel in the Horsefair *for the Conference*, the Lord being our Helper. God is with us, and the people are with us, and every preacher who regards the right of the Conference to station the preachers will surely be with us also. Such an attack *on that right*, on liberty of conscience, and on justice, has not, we think, been known before in the annals of Methodism.....But, blessed be God, trustee tyranny is now at an end in Bristol! The people would not submit themselves to those men, if we would."

On the 30th of August another circular was addressed to

the preachers, and sent throughout the Connexion, containing a formal reply to that so largely quoted above. It had no name attached to it, but was said to be "published by order of the Bristol trustees." This paper begins thus: "A partial and erroneous 'statement of facts' having been laid before you, respecting the expulsion of Mr. Moore from the Bristol chapels by the trustees, it becomes highly necessary that *the real state of the case* should be known."

The following paragraph of this paper charges Mr. Moore and Mr. Bradburn with continued attempts to disturb the peace of the Society at Bristol, in 1790–93, by raising a party in favour of what they call "the ordination scheme;" and with having insidiously succeeded in the erection of Portland chapel for the purpose of having service in church hours, and for the administration of the sacraments. And they contend that Mr. Moore's conduct in this matter quite justified the trustees in refusing to have him as a minister on the Circuit; considering that they were bound by the provisions of their Deed of Trust to appoint "preachers every month," and that they had cordially received three out of the four preachers appointed by the Conference. This address is closed with the following paragraph:—

"The public at large will also consider, that those three preachers appointed by the Conference, and accepted by the trustees, are all of them old members, whose names appear in the *original* Conference deed, and to whom *the most sacred privileges* of the Conference must be as dear as to Mr. Moore or any of his party. But, willing to support the Methodist interest on the *old tried foundation,* they could not permit one of the oldest Societies in the kingdom to be torn to pieces to satisfy the caprice or obstinacy of one man, and eventually to lose them from the Methodist Connexion. And it is hoped the Conference will never

encourage or suffer any of their members *to act contrary to their own rules:*—to go into Circuits and lay baits for the unwary, to draw them away from their original professions and simplicity,—to make parties and sow the seeds of discord among the peaceable inhabitants,—to set families and friends one against another,—(*all of which have been done in Bristol,*) when the matter in contention is allowed by themselves—*not to be necessary to salvation.*"

In order to form a just opinion of the nature of this struggle, and of these conflicting allegations, it must be remembered that Messrs. Benson, Rodda, and Vasey, excellent men and ministers as they were, were the chosen men of the trustees, and not of the people. Mr. Moore, as we are assured by a competent eye and ear-witness, "was the only preacher of the four, appointed to Bristol, of the people's choice." The people therefore very reasonably complained, and said, "Expelling whom we prefer, is, in fact, expelling us also from the chapel, to which we have as much proper right as they themselves who have done this deed. We never entered into the Methodist Society on such terms as to have trustees to rule over us and our preachers." *

Another circular letter addressed to the preachers was published by the trustees under the date of "September 9th." In this paper they indignantly repel the allegation, that they wished to divide the body of the preachers, and to throw off the authority of the Conference, and retort the charge on the preachers, leaders, and people of Portland; admitting that they had rejected Mr. Moore, which they were legally authorized by their Deed of Trust to do; while, they say, their opponents had in many instances thrown off the authority of the Conference, and set its rules at defiance.

* "The Point stated. By BENJAMIN RHODES. 1795," p. 5.

As, for instance, they had shut Messrs. Benson, Rodda, and Vasey out of Portland chapel, although they were bound to receive whomsoever the Conference should appoint: they had purchased a piece of ground, and begun to build a chapel, without the consent of the Conference or of any District Meeting, contrary to rule: they had also interfered with and obstructed the superintendent of the Circuit in his work, and had called in and retained preachers whom the Conference had appointed to other spheres of labour, to supply the chapels from which they had excluded the regularly appointed ministers. Messrs. Benson, Rodda, and Vasey attached a short paragraph to this address, in which they commend these statements of the trustees to the preachers throughout the Connexion; at the same time declaring, that they had taken no step which they could not justify to their brethren.

These statements produced a reply from Mr. Moore, dated "September 13th," in which he formally meets the allegations put forth by the trustees in their two circulars. In allusion to their denial of any wish to divide the preachers, he admits that it may be so *now*, as, after having made mighty efforts to induce a great number of preachers to espouse their cause, they had utterly failed; so that, with the very few who adhered to them, a division would be to them very undesirable.

Mr. Moore and his friends were by this time convinced that, however necessary the course they had taken might be to the general interests of the Connexion, they had been led in so many instances to depart from established rule by the difficulties which surrounded them, that it would be needful to submit the whole case to a legally constituted tribunal, that it might judge whether the strange and peculiar circumstances in which they were placed were sufficient to

justify these serious violations of connexional law. For this purpose Mr. Moore summoned a meeting of the preachers of the District. They met, and considered the whole subject; Mr. William Thompson, who had been the first president after the death of Wesley, and who earnestly supported Mr. Benson in this affair, having come from London to be present. At this meeting it was first proposed to resolve, "That the trustees of no chapel ought to have power to refuse the preachers the Conference appoint, or to place and displace preachers." This sweeping enunciation of a sound abstract Methodistic principle was resisted by Mr. Moore as well as by the adverse party, inasmuch as it would condemn the trustees of Portland chapel equally with those of the Room. Afterward Mr. Benson proposed the following as the terms of reconciliation between the contending parties:—

Deliberations and decision of the District Meeting on the Bristol disputes.

"1. All past things to be forgotten, and *reproachful* and *abusive* expressions to be avoided on both sides, especially from the pulpit.

"2. On condition that Mr. Moore forbears to assist in the administration of the sacrament at Portland chapel, the trustees shall revoke the prohibition sent to him, respecting preaching in the Room and Guinea Street chapel.

"3. That the trustees shall engage to allow the appointment of preachers for *Bristol*, as well as other parts of the kingdom, to remain with the Conference; and that they will receive the preachers the Conference appoint, reserving to themselves *a negative only* in the cases of *immorality*, or of *false doctrine*, clearly proved to the satisfaction of the majority of the trustees, stewards, and leaders; on condition that no service shall be held in church hours, or the Lord's Supper administered at the Room or at Guinea Street chapel, except by a clergyman of the Church of England, and with the

approbation of a majority of the trustees; and that the sacrament shall not be administered even at Portland chapel, except by a clergyman, at least till the Society are *unanimous* for its being administered by the lay preachers.

"4. In case the preachers should be hereafter so divided, that either there should be *no Conference*, or there should be two or more Conferences, that then the trustees should be at full liberty to appoint preachers to occupy their chapels, as the Deeds direct.

"5. That these propositions are to be acceded to, on condition that not only all past things are to be forgotten, but that all buildings are to cease, so as to bring all things back to the same ground on which they stood before the dispute began."

These propositions the District Meeting regarded as inadmissible; on which Mr. Thompson, being exceedingly anxious for some measure conducive to peace and amity to be adopted before he left the meeting, after conversing with Mr. Benson and the preachers who were with him, and also with the trustees, submitted the following as a new proposition:—"As the District Meeting chooses to reject the proposals of the trustees respecting the Lord's Supper being administered by a clergyman *only*, it is now proposed that Portland chapel, with all that incline to worship there, and all other places of the Bristol Circuit where the people are of the same mind, be added to another Circuit, or made a separate Circuit; as they have no objection, in case that is done, to lay preachers, or any others that choose, administering the Lord's Supper in that chapel, whensoever, and as often soever as, is judged proper or convenient." This proposition met with resistance, as the former had done, and was rejected.*

* Messrs. Benson, Rodda, and Vasey's circular of September 16th, 1794.

The meeting then proceeded to consider the whole case, and, with the exception of Mr. Benson and his two colleagues, came to an unanimous resolution, approving Mr. Moore's conduct throughout; and at the same time expressed its opinion, "that Messrs. Benson, Rodda, and Vasey had virtually seceded from the Connexion by sanctioning the proceedings of the disaffected trustees." *

From these decisions it is evident, that the Bristol District Meeting regarded this dispute as one between the bulk of the people and the majority of the preachers on one hand, and the trustees with a few preachers and people on the other; the object of contention being, whether the Conference should be the supreme authority in the Connexion, or whether its decisions should be directed or coerced by the power of the trustees.

These decisions of course gave great offence to the trustees and all who sympathized with them, and led to a proposal for calling an extraordinary sitting of the Conference, to consider and settle the matters in dispute. This proposal was set aside, by a most important circular letter addressed to the preachers by Thomas Hanby and John Pawson. In this production, these eminent ministers, after a brief introduction, very forcibly exhibit in sixteen propositions the unreasonableness of any extraordinary meeting of the Conference; and the unjustifiable conduct of the trustees, who, because Wesley had in error assigned to them a chapel which was entirely his own, afterward refused to make such an alteration in the Deed as he saw to be necessary, and now used their improperly retained power to coerce the Conference. They state that out of one thousand members, of which the Society in Bristol was composed at the Conference, eight hundred and seven had adhered to Mr. Moore

Important circular of Thomas Hanby and John Pawson.

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1845, p. 321.

and the cause of the preachers; and maintain that the trustees of Bristol are not equitably entitled to more power or influence than the trustees generally throughout the kingdom; and that, if the powers which these demanded were awarded to trustees generally, there would be an end of Methodist itinerancy for ever.

This conflict in Bristol was felt throughout the country to be no mere local matter, but a question of vital moment to the interests of Methodism. In proof of this, reference might be made to several publications which were issued at the time: we notice two only. The first is an address on the subject to the Methodists of Cornwall, with two letters, —the first to Mr. Benson, the second to Mr. William Thompson,—by Richard Williams, an able and very energetic local preacher of Cornwall, who, in language forcible, although not very elegant or accurate, sets forth the impolicy and impropriety of these violent contentions about ordinances. The second is a lengthy letter addressed to the preachers by the venerable Alexander Mather. This is a remarkably clear and clever production.

Other documents.

The writer sets out by an appeal to their knowledge of his character; passes on to contend that those members of Society who conscientiously object to the administration of the sacraments by unordained ministers in Methodist chapels, are as much entitled to respect and Christian forbearance as those who plead a conscientious desire for such administration. He then insists on the propriety and necessity of the Conference abstaining from giving any encouragement to any part of a Society who may be disposed to build chapels in opposition to the other part. Having thus prepared the way, he proceeds to consider the case at Bristol. In doing so, he alludes to the conciliatory course adopted by the Conference in regard to the trustees

of the Orphan House at Newcastle, and urges that, if the same kind course had been taken with the trustees of Bristol, all this rancour, bitterness, and mischief might have been avoided. The scope and tenor of the letter are in favour of the trustees; and, at the close, Mr. William Thompson signifies his approbation of the sentiments thus expressed.

But the production of circular letters on this exciting subject was not long limited to individuals. The preachers of the Cornwall Circuits met, and passed a series of Resolutions, in which they pronounce those disputes detrimental to the whole Connexion. They then propound a plan for the settlement of the dispute, which seems to embrace every thing but the alleged ground of all the disunion; namely, the administration of the sacraments by unordained preachers. The trustees of Manchester and Stockport published a circular, in which they approved and commended the act of the Bristol trustees in the expulsion of Mr. Moore from the Room, and intimated their wish to form a combination of trustees to support them in the struggle in which they were engaged. This paper was replied to by the trustees, leaders, and local preachers of Liverpool, and also by the local preachers of Leeds: these letters express decidedly opposite sentiments. In the former, after expressing confidence in the decision of the Bristol District Meeting, and condemning the manner in which blame is cast on Mr. Moore and his friends, the writers say, "You inform us, that you are friends to ancient Methodism, and the good old way. We believe that some of you are, and we most cordially unite with you on this ground. But we are sorry to inform you, that we stand in doubt respecting some whose names appear in your letter: charity itself will not enable us to believe, that men who have long ago left our Connexion,

men who meet in no Class, seldom attend the preaching, do not believe our doctrine, &c., are at all likely to be the most deeply concerned to support the cause of God among us." This letter closes with the expression of fear, lest "the combination" which the trustees were endeavouring to form would deprive them of the blessed privileges which they enjoyed. The Leeds local preachers give an elaborate reply to the arguments of the Manchester trustees, and conclude by advising them "not to call together the trustees of chapels to meddle in matters unconnected with their trusts." Towards the close of 1794, the venerable John Murlin printed and circulated among the preachers a Letter to Mr. Benson. In this communication he says, after reading the papers issued on both sides, "I apprehend the ground of the dispute between them to consist of two points: First, one party insist on primitive Methodism; the other party plead for liberty of conscience. Secondly, one party insist on the Old Plan; the other party believe (if they follow Mr. Wesley's example) they may improve on the Old Plan." The writer then goes on to prove, from the continual succession of changes introduced into Methodism by Wesley during his lifetime, that it was impossible to define "primitive Methodism," or to exhibit any "Old Plan." He then proceeds to insist, that Mr. Wesley during his life had made arrangements, (such, for instance, as empowering Dr. Coke and Alexander Mather to ordain ministers,) which by him were intended to produce further changes after his death. Mr. Murlin then expresses his confident belief that old preachers who have not been ordained have as much right to administer the sacraments as those who have. He concludes by recommending a spirit of mutual love and forbearance. The whole of the letter shows, that the Bristol trustees had no ground for

the violent action they had taken; and teaches, that those who desired the introduction of change should proceed with great kindness and caution.

Increased excitement spreads throughout the Connexion.

With the beginning of 1795 the excitement throughout the Connexion acquired still more intensity, which continued to increase until the Conference of that year. This was evinced, in the usual fashion of the times, by the issue of numerous circulars. Many of these now lie before us. We will briefly refer to the tenor of a few of the most important.

Among others, the trustees, leaders, stewards, and local preachers of the Launceston Circuit, in Cornwall, embodied their views in a circular to the preachers. In this they protest on the part of the people against the conduct of the Bristol trustees; but they at the same time contend for a *veto* to be exercised by the trustees, and the stewards and leaders, either assembled together, or, which they seem to prefer, the trustees in their meeting, and the stewards and leaders in theirs; and when these two bodies separately decided that a preacher was objectionable on the ground of doctrines, morals, or gifts, they thought he ought to be rejected,—at least, removed from that Circuit.

A broad-sheet was circulated among the preachers early in March, bearing the signature of "A Member of the Conference." This document earnestly defends Mr. Moore and condemns the trustees; but it is chiefly remarkable for the violence with which it assails Mr. Benson. Charging him with envying Mr. Bradburn, and aspiring to supremacy in the Connexion, it insinuates that he fostered the disaffection of the trustees, that by these means he might rise to power. Altogether, the spirit of this piece is most objectionable.

The preachers in the Aberdeen District, after the close

of the usual business in their District Meeting, employed themselves in drawing up a series of twenty-nine recommendations, which seem intended to form the basis of a new constitution for the Methodist Connexion. With the exception of some strange and impracticable suggestions, (such as the periodical election and change of trustees, periodical election of leaders, &c.,) these are what would be regarded as a liberal exposition of the Methodist system. And all this might be expected, when it is known that Alexander Kilham was the secretary of that District, and consequently the person who drew up this paper. The date is April 16th, 1795.

It is scarcely possible, at this time, to realize any adequate conception of the extent and intensity of the disunion and strife which were occasioned by the conflicting views, feelings, and objects, entertained by the adverse parties, and fanned into a flame by these numerous circulars. No reasonable doubt can now exist that the trustees, to a great extent, throughout the Connexion, took advantage of the controversy respecting the sacraments, and the violent disputes at Bristol, in order to secure to themselves a larger measure of power and influence in the government of the body than they previously possessed, or than of right belonged to their office; and were even determined to press their design, although it should result in a great division of the Connexion. This was the conclusion to which some of the most influential and best informed of the preachers were led by the proceedings they witnessed. Mr. Pawson says, "That several of the trustees of some of our chapels have formed a design to divide us, is too evident to be denied." * This is confirmed by Mr. Rhodes, who observes, "But to return to

* PAWSON'S "Affectionate Address," p. 3.

Bristol. Some of the trustees there laid plans to divide the body of preachers (for what purpose they know). Their scheme transpired." * It was this conviction which led Mr. Crowther to express himself so strongly as to write, that "this was the grand crisis of Methodism; and I have no scruple in saying, that the success of Mr. Moore and his friends was, in one sense, the salvation of the Connexion." †

Formidable combination of trustees.

Notwithstanding the adverse replies to the Manchester, Salford, and Stockport address, which have been mentioned, and many others of a similar character which might be cited, the efforts of the trustees, and the encouragement which they received, were very great. As they urged their appeal for support on the sacred ground of "old Methodism" and "the plan of Wesley," great numbers in every part of the kingdom sympathized with their professions. The circular of the Manchester, Salford, and Stockport trustees was responded to with more or less approbation, but generally with the fullest approval and most earnest zeal, by the trustees of Dudley, Tipton, Penzance, Chester, Pontefract, Redruth, Birmingham, Dewsbury, Liverpool, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Keighley, Tadcaster, Burslem, Newcastle, and Tunstal; Wakefield, Otley, Pateley Bridge, and Lofthouse; City Road, London; Falmouth, Scarborough, Congleton, Warrington, Leeds, Darlington, Bridlington Quay, Hull, Wednesbury, Stockton, Malton, Sheffield, Darlaston, Bolton-le-Moors, St. Austle, Preston, Worcester, Howden, Halifax, Pocklington, and Market Weighton; Birstal, Bramley, York, Armley, Easingwold, Bradford, New Mills, Bullock Smithy, and Macclesfield.

But whilst this extensive combination of trustees was

* RHODES'S "Point stated," p. 8.

† CROWTHER'S "Portraiture of Methodism," p. 133.

The preachers and people generally determine to support the rights of the Conference.

being formed and organized for the purpose of obtaining a powerful influence in the Connexion, it became evident that the majority of the preachers and of the people entertained different views, and were determined to resist the threatened encroachment. Bristol, the principal seat of the struggle, may, indeed, be regarded as representing the general state of opinion and feeling throughout the Connexion. There the great majority of the Society evinced the strongest determination to secure two things:—first, to resist the *veto* on the appointment of preachers claimed by the trustees, and to vindicate the absolute right of the Conference to station the preachers; and, secondly, to insist on the right of the Methodist Societies to all the ordinances and privileges of a Christian church.

Nor was the result of this contest long doubtful. The people, with Mr. Moore and those preachers who assisted him, immediately applied themselves to provide a commodious place of worship suitable to the want of the Bristol congregation and Society, instead of that from which they had been expelled. Accordingly a piece of ground was procured, and a large and handsome place of worship, significantly called the Eben-ezer chapel, was erected in King Street. This building virtually superseded the old chapel in Broadmead; so that the trustees, with only a fragment of the Society, although supported by the powerful ministerial talents of Mr. Benson and his colleagues, saw that a division would be fatal to their hopes, and almost to their existence as a body. An accommodation between the contending parties became therefore as necessary as it was desirable. We accordingly find, as noticed in a preceding chapter, that Mr. Benson put himself in communication with Mr. Moore for the purpose of devising some plan of agreement. Afterward, Messrs. Pawson, Mather, and Dr.

Consultation and arrangements for an accommodation.

Coke, drew up and circulated in manuscript "Humble Proposals for Peace." The copy of this document which I have before me is accompanied by an autograph note of Dr. Coke's. These "proposals" are moderate and conciliatory; and they were followed in the month of May by the publication of an "Address to the Methodist Body at large and the Preachers in particular," which bore the signatures of Alexander Mather, William Thompson, and Joseph Benson.

This Address commenced with an earnest exhibition of the blessings of peace in a Christian church, and of the duty of restoring and maintaining it. Then we have set forth, in eight several particulars, the evils that would result to Methodism from a division of the Societies; after which follow various recommendations for such modifications of existing rules and usages as were judged likely to be generally received, and to restore unity to the Connexion.

The Conference of 1795.

Several other circulars and pamphlets were issued on both sides; and, while the public mind of Methodism was thus excited, the Conference met at Manchester. A number of trustees also assembled at the same time in that town, as delegates from the several trusts. As already mentioned in the preceding account of the dispute respecting the ordinances, a Committee was chosen in the Conference to prepare some plan for recommending such emendations of the disciplinary regulations of the body as should give general satisfaction. Meanwhile the delegated trustees met, and entered upon their deliberations. But it soon appeared that these were greatly divided in opinion and purpose. One section, who shared the sentiments of the Bristol trustees, and were principally High-Church Tories, were most anxious to urge the Conference

Division of sentiment between the trustee delegates.

They separate into two sections.

to enforce a sort of Act of Uniformity, by which the Methodist Societies might be brought back to the usages of Wesley's days, or to what they called the original plan of Methodism. Another portion of them, consisting in part of political Liberals or semi-Liberals, were only anxious to extend the privilege of receiving the sacrament in church or chapel, according to the wishes of the people in various places; while each party desired the infusion of a larger measure of the lay element into the government of the body. This difference of opinion among the delegates occasioned such a warm controversy, that they found it impossible to act in concert, and accordingly separated, and continued meeting in different places, each party looking to its own objects.

After spending six successive evenings in earnest deliberation, the Committee submitted a series of propositions to the Conference. When they had been considered by that body, they were sent to the trustees, who proposed certain alterations. The Conference then appointed a few preachers to confer with the trustees. By these means a certain number of regulations were prepared, and fully adopted by the Conference. Those which refer to the sacraments have been already noticed: we now give at length those of a disciplinary character,* the whole forming what is known in Methodism as "The Plan of Pacification."

Termination of these disputes by the disciplinary part of the Plan of Pacification.

Satisfaction of the trustees with the result.

The extent to which these measures gave satisfaction, may be judged from the following testimonies. The section of the trustees which advocated the views of those of Bristol, sent the following communication to the Conference:—

"Resolved, That the thanks of this Meeting be unanimously given to the president and the members of the

* See Appendix I, at the end of this volume.

Conference, for their kind attention to the business of the delegation of the trustees that has been laid before them.

"Resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Conference, signed by the president and secretary.

"MATTHEW MAYER,
WILLIAM PRICE."

"*Committee Room of Delegates,*
"*August 4th,* 1795."

The other section of trustees sent the following letter :—

"TO THE METHODIST PREACHERS ASSEMBLED IN CONFERENCE.

"DEAR AND HONOURED FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

"WE beg you to accept our sincere thanks for your kind attention in sending us your propositions for general pacification and discipline.

"We are sensible of the liberality and candour which are manifest in them. It is evident from their tenor, that you have attempted to meet the views of each party. We hope and trust that, by the blessing of God, it may be a means of uniting the whole body of Methodists throughout the three kingdoms.

"With all deference to the Conference, we submit the following propositions to their further attention :—

"That some provision be made for the brethren who differ from the judgment of trustees or the major part of a Society on the subjects in question, as we suppose such cases are numerous and important : we particularly refer to the Leeds Circuit.

"That the case of those chapels where there are no leaders be more fully explained.

"Also those where the sacrament is administered every Sunday in the parochial church.

"Although we think it our duty thus candidly to state the views which have occurred to us in carefully perusing the propositions, yet we think it necessary to say we shall cheerfully acquiesce in the final determination of the Conference.

"Signed on behalf of the Meeting,

"MICHAEL LONGRIDGE."

"*Manchester,*

"*August 3rd,* 1795."

The testimony of Mr. Alexander Kilham may be added. He said that he and those who thought with him agreed to accept the Plan of Pacification from the following considerations:—"1. We have gained a great deal more than we expected. 2. Our people are not prepared for more at present. 3. In two or three years we shall have all that we wish." *

Thus it appears that all parties were satisfied with the measures then adopted, as far as they went, although some looked to further changes, for which they confessed the people were not at that time prepared. What then was the nature of the changes thus introduced? As far as they respected discipline, it is certain that they made no alteration in the ruling element of connexional government, as established by Wesley's Deed Poll,—namely, the absolute power of the Conference to appoint preachers to all the Methodist chapels. On the contrary, the supremacy of the Conference was, in these measures, most distinctly and emphatically recognised and enforced. And the extended privileges and protection afforded to the Methodist laity by those propositions, principally consist in means for guarding the Connexion against any erroneous or improper appoint-

* Kilham's Life, p. 225.

ment which the Conference might make, by allowing trustees, leaders, and stewards to judge of the morality, orthodoxy, and ministerial ability of any preacher sent to their respective Circuits.

Renewal of agitation.

From the auspicious manner in which the Conference of 1795 closed, it might have been hoped that the Connexion would be soon restored to peace and unity; and so, in all probability, it would have been, but for the existence of two active and influential causes of disquiet. The first of these was the troubled state of Europe, and especially the political excitement which prevailed at that period in England. The French Revolution had not only succeeded, but was invested with its greatest glory by the success which had crowned the French arms in Italy and Germany; while at home the prevalence of general distress, combined with the rapid spread of republican opinions, brought the nation to the verge of rebellion, and disposed the people to receive with eagerness any allegation of tyranny and oppression, and to respond heartily to any call to liberty, however unreasonable or vain the ground of the appeal. The second cause of the discontent in the Methodist Societies was the conduct of Mr. Alexander Kilham and his associates. As indicated in the extract given above, he received the Plan of Pacification only as an instalment of what he had demanded. He accordingly began, soon after the Conference, the course of action which has been detailed in the preceding chapter, and which, as there related, led to his expulsion in 1796. Afterward, released from all restraint, he commenced an active and vigorous course of agitation in all parts of the Connexion. Circular letters and pamphlets were diligently disseminated, meetings held, and speeches delivered through the country, for the avowed purpose of persuading the people that the preachers had conspired to deprive them of

their just liberty, and that, as intelligent Christian men, they were bound to resist the aggression, to combine for the purpose of destroying the supremacy of the Conference, and to bring the preachers to what was alleged to be their scriptural and just position,—to be the servants of the people. The result was, that from the Conference of 1796 to that of 1797, great and continued excitement was kept up in the principal Societies throughout the country.

Mr. Pawson's revision of the Large Minutes.

The Conference of 1797, as might be expected in such circumstances, was looked forward to by all parties with deep interest and anxiety; and there was one man among the preachers who devoted himself with great zeal and ability to prepare himself, and the Conference, for the impending crisis. Mr. John Pawson, perceiving that the circumstances of the Connexion required a clear and complete definition of the principal rules and regulations of the body, set himself to make a careful revision of the "Large Minutes." These were a collection of the most important regulations, made by Wesley from the "Minutes" of various years, and published as a compendium of Methodist law, for the information and guidance of preachers and people. But, the troubled state of the Connexion having led Mr. Pawson to look carefully into the subject, he found that the changes which had been introduced into the Societies by lapse of time and change of circumstances, had rendered many of these regulations obsolete, and called for a modification of others. He accordingly revised these Minutes throughout, making such alterations and omissions as he thought necessary.

Adopted by the Conference of 1797.

On the assembling of Conference, Mr. Pawson submitted his emendations to his brethren; and they thought the subject of so much importance, that they appropriated two whole days to a careful consideration of it.

The whole of the Minutes, as revised by Mr. Pawson, were first read over at length, and then considered, clause by clause; and, a few alterations having been made during this investigation, the whole, as approved by the Conference, was declared to be the standard of Methodist law, and as such was recognised by the following declaration:—

"Whereas, we, the undersigned, have on this and the preceding day carefully revised the rules drawn up and left us by our late venerable father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which were published by him in our Large Minutes, to which we consented when we were admitted, and by which we were regulated during his life: And whereas we have collected together those rules, which we believe to be essential to the existence of Methodism, as well as others to which we have no objection: We do now VOLUNTARILY and in GOOD FAITH sign our names, as approving of, and engaging to comply with, the aforesaid collection of rules, or code of laws, God being our Helper."

The president, secretary, and every other preacher present, in rotation, signed this document, except Mr. William Thom, who refused to do so, and left the Connexion. Four other preachers afterward followed his example. They all joined Mr. Kilham, and together founded the New Connexion. By this measure the Conference gave to the body a clearly defined code of laws, as a basis on which its polity stood, to which the preachers were fully committed, and to which any other rules, afterward agreed on, could be added.

Trustee delegates assemble at Leeds during the sittings of Conference.

On the 31st of July a number of trustees assembled in Leeds, delegated from several trusts throughout the country. Influenced by the prevalent discontent, they came, as had been the case in 1795, to urge their complaints on the consideration of the Conference, with a view to obtain such

further regulations as would be likely to remove all causes of uneasiness. No business was done on that day, as all the delegates had not arrived. On this and subsequent days, sixty-seven delegates attended from as many several trusts.* It was resolved first of all, "That all general questions relative to the welfare of the Methodist Societies be discussed and decided before those of a particular and local nature."

Discussions and resolutions of the delegates.

A motion was then made and seconded, "That the preachers be requested to publish an annual account of the receipts and disbursements of what is commonly called the Preachers' Fund;" but this was negatived.

The following measures were then adopted:—

"*Resolved,*

"1. That the Conference be requested to publish annually a statement of the receipts and disbursements on account of Kingswood School, the Yearly Collection, and the Book Room.

"2. That it is expedient that a Committee of the delegates, in conjunction with a Committee of the preachers, should examine the three accounts above mentioned, in order that a full and explicit account of the present state of each separate fund may be published.

"3. That it is necessary, in order to restore and preserve peace in the Connexion, that two or three delegates from each District should in future be at liberty to attend the Conference every year; and that the said delegates should have votes in making or altering the Rules of the Methodist Societies, and in the appropriation of the money in the hands of the preachers, on account of the three funds above mentioned."

"*Ordered,*

"That the Conference be requested to signify to this

* See Appendix J, at the end of this volume.

meeting how far they agree with this meeting in the above resolutions."

"*Resolved,*

"That this meeting is ready to appoint a Committee to meet a Committee of the preachers, to discuss any matter relative to the Rules of the Methodist Societies, and the best mode of spreading scriptural religion through the land." *

The Conference, having considered the subject, sent the following letter to the meeting of delegates:—

"LEEDS, *August 2nd,* 1797.

"DEAR BRETHREN,

"YOUR letter was read in the full Conference, and each proposition contained therein was distinctly considered, and the following answers were agreed upon:— Letter from Conference to the delegates.

"1. Although the accounts of the disbursements of the Kingswood School have been regularly kept, and audited by a Committee appointed by the Conference; yet, as these accounts have not been published in detail, we determine in future to give our friends all the satisfaction in our power on this head.

"2. As to the Yearly Collection, we last year published a detail of its disbursements; but that having been done by different persons, and the mode being entirely new, we were not then so exact as we are determined in future to be.

"3. Respecting the books, we refer you to the pamphlet which accompanies this (pages 5 and 6).

"4. With respect to delegates, the Conference, having maturely considered the subject, are thoroughly persuaded, with many of our Societies whose addresses were read this

* "Minutes of the Proceedings of a Meeting of Delegates. Leeds: Thomas Gill. 1797."

day, that they cannot admit any but travelling preachers into their body, and preserve the system of Methodism entire, particularly the itinerant plan.

"We are, dear Brethren,

"In behalf of the Conference,

"Your truly affectionate Servants,

"THOMAS COKE, *President*,

SAMUEL BRADBURN, *Secretary*."

The delegates, having received this reply, proceeded with their business, and resolved further, "That a Committee of this meeting be appointed to meet a Committee of the preachers, in order to consider what farther can be done to promote the peace of the Connexion."

"A Committee of the following persons, with the chairman, was appointed; viz., Matthew Mayer, Edmund Whitehead, George Garside, Michael Longridge, John Fletcher, William Hardon, John Turner, Matthew Naylor, and John Barker."

After this Committee had held a consultation with a Committee of preachers appointed by the Conference, the meeting of delegates resumed, when the following resolution was carried unanimously:—

Further resolutions of delegates, and replies of Conference.

"That the Conference be requested to make a rule by which all moneys sent to the Conference, all deficiencies requested to be paid by the Conference, and all information necessary to be communicated from the Quarter-days to the Conference, be stated in a general letter, (the form to be drawn up and printed by the Conference,) and signed by the Circuit stewards, in concurrence with the Quarterly Meeting; and that the accounts of the Quarterly Meeting lie open to the inspection of any member of the Methodist Society, that may wish to examine it."

It was also resolved unanimously:—"That the Conference be requested to re-consider and revise their rules relative to local preachers, and to the calling of meetings."

To these communications the Conference sent the following answers:—

"LEEDS, *August 4th*, 1797.

"THE District Meetings shall make no divisions of Circuits, or take in any bill of deficiencies, or settle any other temporal affairs, which have not first met with the approbation of the Quarterly Meeting or Quarterly Meetings respectively, and been signed by the respective Circuit stewards.

"(Signed) THOMAS COKE, *President*,
SAMUEL BRADBURN, *Secretary*."

"IN explaining the above minute, it was fully and explicitly understood that, if there be any accusation against a preacher, or any difficult affair to settle, not only the Circuit or town stewards, but any leader, or even member, shall be admitted as evidence into the District Meeting, provided the matter has been first heard at a Quarterly Meeting.

"(Signed) T. COKE,
S. BRADBURN."

The meeting of delegates then proceeded to consider the case of the Bristol trustees; and having read a letter from the trustees of Broadmead and Guinea Street chapels, and a printed statement of their case, they came to the following resolution:—"That this meeting having duly considered the situation of the Bristol brethren with respect to Mr. Bradford's conduct in opening the new chapel in

church hours, and as the Plan of Pacification mutually agreed to by the meeting of trustees, &c., with the preachers of the Manchester Conference, appears to have been violated by Mr. Bradford's conduct; it meets with the decided disapprobation of this meeting, and the Conference are requested to take the Bristol case into consideration, and to transmit to this meeting their decision on it as soon as possible." It was also resolved, "That the conduct of those preachers who, in conjunction with Mr. Bradford, have violated the rules of Pacification, also meets with our decided disapprobation."

The fault here alleged against Mr. Bradford, namely, that of conducting service in church hours in the new chapel at Bristol, had previously excited attention. The trustees insisted that it was a violation of the Plan of Pacification, published their view of the case, and afterward appealed to the District Meeting. The preachers accordingly assembled, and unanimously declared that, in their judgment, "Mr. Bradford and his colleagues had only a choice of evils before them;" and that "greater evils would have ensued from not preaching on the forenoon on Sundays than any that could follow from doing it." The District Committee, therefore, recommended that the case should stand over to be determined by the Conference itself. The trustees accordingly felt anxious to induce this body to adopt their own view of the case.

At this stage of their proceedings the delegates received a letter from Mr. Alexander Kilham, stating that he had been appointed a delegate by a majority of the trustees of Hunslet chapel, and inquiring whether he could be admitted in that character. The case having been considered, it was resolved,—"That Mr. Alexander Kilham, being a preacher under the censure of the Conference of Methodist preachers,

cannot with propriety be admitted into this meeting." This resolution, signed by the president and secretary, was sent to Mr. Kilham as an answer to his letter.

On the morning of Saturday, August 5th, the delegates resolved, "That the Committee of this meeting do consider with the preachers' Committee on the following subjects:—

"1. The answer of the Conference with respect to the Bristol case.

"2. How far the preachers will agree, that when the Conference shall make any new rule for the Societies at large, provided that the travelling preachers find at the first Quarterly Meeting, that the major part of that meeting, in conjunction with the preachers, are of opinion, that enforcing of such rule in that Circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit, it shall not be enforced in opposition to the judgment of a Quarterly Meeting until after a second Conference.

"3. How far the Conference will agree to submit any new rule that they wish to make for the Connexion to the sanction of any meeting of trustees, stewards, &c., sent to places where the Conference shall be held in future."

A plan for the regulation of the executive government of the Methodist Societies was by the order of this meeting recommended to the consideration of the Conference.

On Monday morning, August 7th, the delegates received the following letter from the Conference, signed by the president and secretary:—

"Dear Brethren,

"In compliance with a request made by a Committee of persons from various parts; namely, 'that the Conference be requested to reconsider and revise those rules which relate to the calling of meetings and appointing local preachers,

made last year;' we say, no local preacher shall be permitted to preach in any other Circuit without producing a recommendation from the superintendent of the Circuit in which he lives, nor suffer any invitation to be admitted as a plea, but from men in office who act in conjunction with the superintendent of that Circuit.

"The design of this rule is to prevent any, under the character of a local preacher, from burdening the people, either by collecting money, or by living upon them, and to prevent improper persons, who bear no part of the expense, from inviting local preachers thus to visit them: but it was never intended to reflect the least disrespect on any of our worthy brethren, the local preachers, whom, considered as a body, we greatly respect. And it should not be lost sight of, that several of the most respectable local preachers in the kingdom, who were in the Committee that met the Committee of the preachers appointed by the Conference, declared their high approbation of the rule, and desired it might be strengthened as much as possible, as none could justly complain of it.

"No local preachers shall keep Love-feasts without the consent of the superintendent, nor in anywise interfere in his business. Let every one keep in his own place, and attend to the duties of his own station.

"And as the Committee above-mentioned have requested that the Minutes of the last Conference concerning the calling of meetings to consider of the affairs of the Society or Connexion be explained, and as we are exceedingly desirous of preserving the peace and union of the whole body, we have agreed upon the following explanation:—

"1. As the Leaders' Meeting is the proper meeting for the Society, and the Quarterly Meeting for the Circuit, we think that other formal meetings, in general, would be

contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudicial in their consequences.

"But, 2. In order to be as tender as possible, consistently with what we believe to be essential to the welfare of our Societies, we allow that other meetings may be held, which first receive the approbation of the superintendent, and the Leaders' Meeting, or Quarterly Meeting, provided that the superintendent, if he please, may be present at every such meeting."

This communication having been considered by the delegates, it was resolved, "That the above explanation is satisfactory to this meeting, as it does not include any denial of the right of trustees to meet in the execution of the business of their trusts."

The following communication was then received from the Conference, signed, as usual, by the president and secretary:—

"LEEDS, *August 7th*, 1797.

"DEAR BRETHREN,

"IT is the opinion of the Conference, that the Plan of Pacification, in respect to the affairs at Bristol, has been broke; but they are determined this shall not be a precedent, but they will take proper measures that the Plan shall be sacredly observed in future."

On reading this note, the delegates resolved, "That this meeting expect the Conference to forbid any preacher to preach in the new chapel, Horsefair, Bristol, during the time of church hours, on condition that the trustees and people of the Old Room return to the Connexion, and assist their brethren, according to the Plan of Pacification;"

and immediately sent a copy of their resolution to the Conference.

The following letter from the Conference was then read :—

"Dear Brethren,

"The Conference spent most of the forenoon in considering the subject mentioned in your letter relative to our executive government, and have passed the following rules, namely,—

"1. That in cases which (according to the judgment of the Chairman) cannot be settled by the ordinary District Committee, he shall have authority to summon three of the nearest superintendents, who shall be incorporated with the District Committee, and have an equal right to vote and settle everything until the Conference.

"But it is to be understood that everything is to be regularly passed through the Leaders' Meetings, to Quarterly Meetings, and finally to the District Meeting, which, as regulated above, will generally be competent to the most difficult cases.

"2. That if at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new rule for the Societies at large, and such rule should be objected to in the first Quarterly Meeting in any given Circuit, and if the major part of that Meeting, in conjunction with the preachers, be of opinion that the enforcing of such rule in that Circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit, it shall not be enforced in opposition to the judgment of such Quarterly Meeting, till after the second Conference. But if the rule be confirmed by the second Conference, it shall be binding on the whole Connexion. Nevertheless, the Quarterly Meetings rejecting a new rule shall not, by publications, public meetings,

or otherwise, make that rule a cause of contention, but shall strive by every means to preserve the peace of the Connexion.

"The Conference have appointed a Committee to meet this evening, to consider what remains of the case of Bristol, and to make their report to-morrow morning, when you shall have our determination."

On the morning of Tuesday, August 8th, a communication was received by the delegates from the Conference, respecting the Bristol case; upon which the meeting passed the following resolution, and sent a copy to the Conference:—"That the paper sent into Conference from this meeting yesterday, relative to the Bristol business, contains the ultimatum of this meeting; and that the Conference be requested to send to this meeting their final determination on the business."

The delegates then proceeded to pass resolutions for the purpose of preventing improper persons from obtaining admission into any future meeting of delegates, and for appointing a standing Committee of trustees, the majority of whom should have power to call together a general meeting, whenever in their judgment the circumstances of the Connexion rendered such a step necessary.

On Wednesday, August 9th, the delegates received the following communication from the Conference:—

"Dear Brethren,

"The Conference, in union with the Committee of the trustees in Leeds, advise the contending parties in Bristol to settle their differences in the following manner:—

"1. That our brethren who attend divine service in the Old Room and Guinea Street chapel unite with their brethren of the new chapel, and bring all their subscriptions and collections into one and the same channel with our brethren of the new chapel, according to the agreement made at Manchester, and take seats and attend in general at the new chapel.

"2. That our brethren of the new chapel, if the others comply with the above conditions, give up the service in church hours in that chapel.

"Signed on behalf of the Conference,

"T. COKE, *President*,

S. BRADBURN, *Secretary*.

"Signed on behalf of the Trustees,

"THOMAS CROWTHER,
JOHN MAWSON,
JOHN TURNER,
THOMAS WOODCROFT,
WILLIAM HARDEN,
ABRAHAM DICKINSON,
JOHN WHITAKER,
MATTHEW MAYER,
JOHN FLETCHER,
GEORGE GARSIDE,
JOHN BUTLER."

Amicable termination of these disputes.

Thus terminated the grave and harassing business of this most important Conference. In this manner the trustees were united with the preachers, in spirit and aim. The division of the body, which enemies to its prosperity, both within and without, ardently desired, was entirely averted; and preachers and people, released from vexatious and unprofitable wrangling, were able to pursue their true and proper calling of building up believers, and spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land.

Conclusion.

As soon as the last-mentioned document was received by the delegates, they regarded their work as ended, and their

object as attained. They accordingly passed the following resolutions:—

"1. That our minutes be printed and sent to the delegates of those Circuits who subscribed toward the expense of printing them.

"2. That the thanks of this meeting be unanimously given to the president and the members of the Conference, for the kind attention to the business of the delegation of the trustees that has been laid before them; and that it is their determination to support the Methodist cause on the plan agreed on at this Conference."

Having sent the above resolutions to the Conference, and passed votes of thanks to their own president and secretary, the delegates closed their minutes with the insertion of the following letter:—

"Dear Brethren,

"We have received your letter of thanks, which gave us very great pleasure; and we do sincerely return you our thanks for your candid and Christian-like conduct throughout the whole of your proceedings in the character of representatives of the trustees, &c.

"Your determination to support the Methodist cause, on the plan agreed to by Conference, still adds to our satisfaction. We join our hands and hearts with yours, and trust we shall all of us continue faithful till death in the good old cause, which many of you and us have so long been engaged in, and in which we are determined to spend our strength and lives.

"To God's holy keeping we recommend you. Assure all our brethren whom you have represented in the present business, that we are faithfully attached to them by every

tie of love and duty. May the God of peace and love be with you and yours for ever!

"We are

"Your truly affectionate Brethren,

"THOMAS COKE, *President*,

SAMUEL BRADBURN, *Secretary*.

"Signed on behalf and by order of the Conference.

"LEEDS, *August 9th*, 1797."

As it is scarcely possible to over-estimate the importance of the proceedings of this Conference, and their influence on the future peace and stability of the Methodist body, we have given a full account of the origination of the several measures, and the form and connexion in which they were adopted. But as it may be necessary that the reader may have these regulations as a whole, and in their proper position as parts of the Methodist disciplinary economy, they are appended to this volume* precisely as they are found in the octavo Minutes for the year.

Methodism, with these emendations, stands before us matured and consolidated. Our attention may therefore be suitably directed to a calm and impartial investigation into the true character and status of this religious community, when regarded as a scriptural church of Christ. This will form the subject of the following chapter.

* See Appendix K, at the end of this volume.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SCRIPTURAL CHARACTER OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH.

THE Constitution of the Christian Church—Ecclesiastical Position claimed for the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion—Scriptural Validity of the Appointment of Wesleyan Ministers—Apostolical Succession—The Doctrines of High Churchmen on this Subject opposed to History, and contrary to Scripture—Scriptural Test of ministerial Character—Manner of selecting and appointing Wesleyan Ministers—This Course sufficiently proves the scriptural Character of the Wesleyan Ministry—Second Class of Objections to Methodism, on Account of its Organization and ministerial Rule—Unsound Assumptions made by these Opponents of Wesleyanism—Practical Inapplicability of Democracy to Church Polity—Secular and political Analogies fail—This Opposition to Methodist Polity not sustained by scriptural Proof—All Appointment to Office in the Church divine—This divine Appointment discerned and carried into Effect by the Ministry—Bearing of the apostolic Decision (Acts xv.) on this Point—Entire Failure of this Theory—The Wesleyan View of the pastoral Office, and the Means employed to sustain its Authority—The Effects which the Legislation of 1795 and 1797 had on the Constitution of Methodism—Substance of the disciplinary Part of the Plan of Pacification—And of the Regulations of 1797—Prominent Elements of the Constitution of Methodism after these Changes had been made—The Wesleyan connexional Principle in full Accordance with Scripture—Ministerial Rule asserted and commanded in the New Testament—Methodism pre-eminently favourable to the religious Rights of the Laity—Theory of Methodism—In Agreement with Scripture—Wesleyan Methodism a scriptural Church.

IN proceeding to inquire into the claims of the Methodist Connexion, as settled by the regulations of the Conference of 1797, to be regarded as a scriptural Christian church, it will be necessary for us in the first place to offer a few brief observations on the constitution and character of the church of Christ generally.

The constitution of the Christian church.

In the original Scriptures of the New Testament, the term which we have rendered "Church" is ἐκκλησία, a word which signifies "an assembly:" it is derived from ἐκκαλέω, "*to call out.*" The origin of our Saxon word "Church" is doubtful; but it is to be taken as representing the sense of the Greek term. In its largest, and probably its most accurate, meaning, this word sets before us the church universal; that is, the collective body of all those over the whole earth who profess to believe in Christ, and acknowledge Him to be the Saviour of mankind. (Col. i. 18.) The early fathers frequently used the word in this sense; and this is what we mean when we speak of "the visible church."

A second sense of the term "Church" is that in which it is applied to a body of Christians, or a religious society, meeting together for worship. The word was frequently used in this sense by the early fathers, and the New Testament writers. (Acts xiv. 23; Rom. xvi. 5.) And this is the precise meaning in which it is employed in the "Articles of Religion" of the Church of England; the nineteenth of which says, "The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."

The term "Church" was also used in ancient times to designate the several churches or congregations of Christians contained within a certain geographical territory, as Cyprian speaks of "the church of God in Africa and Numidia." And it is frequently employed now, in an analogous sense, to signify any denomination of Christians distinguished by particular doctrines, ceremonies, &c., as the Romish Church, the Greek Church, the English Church, &c.

It is not our purpose to enter into any controversy as to

the strict and proper sense of the term "Church" in its bearing on the claims and doctrines of the present day, any farther than to say, that the Popish dogma of one visible church, under a visible head, is clearly contrary to Scripture, which distinctly speaks of numerous churches, such as "the churches of Judea," "of Achaia," "the seven churches of Asia," &c. So far, indeed, were the apostles from making provision for one governing head for this universal church, that they did the very opposite, by making provision and arrangements for the direction and preservation of the several churches raised up by their labours. Nor does the opposite theory of the perfect independence of every separate religious *congregation* find more countenance from the inspired writers of the New Testament. For, whatever might have been the case with small, isolated, and unimportant congregations, it is certain that in most of the large, influential, and flourishing churches, many presbyters were engaged, acting in concert over several congregations. So, when congregations were formed in the suburbs of cities, or in the country places about them, country bishops, or visiting presbyters, were appointed, who acted under the direction of the presbytery of the city.

Ecclesiastical position claimed for the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion.

We are by no means anxious to limit the meaning of the term "Church," or to define with exact precision the sense in which it is to be understood. If it is used to set forth the entire body of those who profess faith in Christ as the Saviour of mankind, throughout the world, then it is maintained, that the Wesleyan Methodist community form a scriptural and integral part of this universal church. Or, when the term is applied to particular denominations of Christians, as the Romish Church, the English Church, &c., we insist on the strict propriety of calling the Wesleyan

Connexion the Methodist Church: while to those who continue to call every separate Christian congregation a church, we say that the Wesleyan body is a union or connexion of churches.

Let it not, however, be supposed, because this is said, that we desire to bring the term "Church" into more frequent and general use in association with Methodism, to the exclusion or extinction of the old and venerated name "Societies." On the contrary, we greatly prefer the latter, and regret the frequent use of the term "Church" in recent times. It is not the name, but the thing, that we insist upon. No desire is felt for the abolition of our old nomenclature, nor for the introduction of any novel or high-sounding terms; but there is claimed for the religious Societies in the Methodist Connexion a scriptural and ecclesiastical *status* equal to that occupied by the churches of any other denomination.

Although, in maintaining this claim, it is determined to keep at the greatest distance from a controversial manner and spirit, it is a fact patent to the world, and may as well be explicitly recognised, that this claim is rejected and opposed by two classes of persons; who, whilst they occupy antagonistic positions, assail the pretensions of Wesleyan Methodism to a scriptural character by directly opposite principles and arguments.

The first of these parties comprises the Papists and the High Churchmen, with many others in the National Establishment, who deny that the Wesleyan preachers have any real scriptural ministerial appointment or position, repudiate the validity and efficacy of the sacraments as administered by them, and consider the whole body as in a state of schism. The other class referred to is found in the ranks of extreme Dissent. They maintain that the

Methodist Conferences of 1795 and 1797, instead of conferring any boon, or giving any additional privileges to their Societies, actually—from a lust of power and thirst for aggrandizement—robbed them of rights and powers which they previously possessed, thereby violating the first principles which ought to regulate the internal economy of a Christian church, and thus perpetuated a vicious and corrupt ecclesiastical system. The following vindication of the Wesleyan Methodist economy will, it is hoped, serve to convince candid Christians that these conflicting allegations are equally and entirely without foundation.

Scriptural validity of the appointment of Wesleyan ministers.

On entering upon this task, it will be necessary to show on scriptural evidence, that the Wesleyan Methodist preachers are truly ministers of Christ. This is an essential element of the case. If it be not so, if these men are not recognised by the Divine Head as His ministers, the entire claim of the Connexion to a scriptural *status* falls to the ground.

But why should this be doubted? These men are unexceptionable in morals; they possess fair intellectual ability and ministerial gifts; they are heard every Sabbath by countless thousands throughout the length and breadth of the land, who receive and profit by their ministrations; while numerous Societies in every part of the country regard them as their fathers in the Gospel. Why then should it be assumed that these persons are not truly and indeed ministers of Christ, as they appear to be? The answer given, by one of these parties, to this inquiry is, that there are, by unalterable divine appointment, three distinct orders of ministers in the church of Christ, namely, bishops, priests, and deacons; that bishops only have authority to ordain; and that consequently, where there is no bishop, there can be no valid ordination, no true ministers, or church, or

Apostolical succession.

sacraments. And to sustain and enforce this dogma, it is asserted that there has been in the church a regular and unbroken series of valid episcopal ordinations, commencing with the apostles, and reaching down to the present times; and it is affirmed that all those, and none but those, who have been ordained by a bishop in this unbroken line of succession, are true ministers of Christ; and consequently that Methodist preachers, not having been so ordained, are not ministers. These statements are so startling in their nature, involve such monstrous consequences, and are so opposed to Scripture, that it would be regarded as unworthy of any reasonable man's time or attention to confute them, if they had not been put forward with such persevering constancy, and asserted as matters of fact with such confidence and authority, that they are extensively believed.

Let the reader observe that, if these statements are true, the purity, holiness, and truth, which we have always regarded as absolutely necessary, must be given up, as not at all essential to the Christian character, or, at least, as not essential to the character of a Christian minister. According to this scheme, it is not personal qualification, or any divine vocation, but the act of ordination, which constitutes the minister. So that, be the man ever so wise, pious, or useful, without this precise ordination he is no minister of Christ: while, provided he has this ordination, he is a Christian minister endowed with the gift of conferring grace, although he may be at the same time a most abandoned and profligate sinner. Upon the principles now under consideration, it is undeniable that this boasted line of succession cannot be drawn but by including an infidel, a Simonist, a drunkard, an adulterer, among those who are thus set forth as the

medium through which all spiritual influence and covenanted grace were handed down to the present and future ages of the world.

But the allegations made respecting this succession are contrary to fact. It is indeed boldly asserted, "As to the fact of the apostolical succession, &c., this is too notorious to require proof. Every link of the chain is known, from St. Peter to our present metropolitans." * This manner of assertion may be as convenient as it is bold, but it cannot answer the purpose for which it is put forward. A brief citation of the best authorities will show that this is a reckless statement, without any foundation in history.

Eusebius, the principal authority for the ecclesiastical history of the church during the first three centuries, says, "We are totally unable to find even the bare vestiges of those who may have travelled the way before us: unless, perhaps, what is only presented in the slight intimations which some in different ways have transmitted in certain partial narratives of the times in which they lived; who, raising their voices before us, like torches at a distance, and as looking down from some commanding height, call out and exhort us where we should walk." Surely it may be reasonably doubted, whether these "slight intimations," culled from partial narratives of the times, these "torches at a distance," are sufficient in their light and guidance, on a subject of so much importance as the validity of churches, and the efficacy of ordinations and sacraments.

The doctrines of High Churchmen on this subject opposed to history.

Those who trace their succession in the manner indicated above, deduce their spiritual descent from "Peter, as bishop of Rome, who is supposed to have held this see, on the authority of Eusebius. But this is far from being a settled point. Dr. Cave doubted it; Archbishop Cranmer says,

* "Oxford Tracts for the Times," No. VII., p. 2.

'that it is not certain that Peter ever was at Rome.' Flacius Illyricus and Zanchius are of the same mind. But if this doubtful point is granted, who succeeded Peter? No man on earth can tell. Tertullian, Rufinus, and Epiphanius say, Clement succeeded Peter. Jerome declares that most of the Latin authors supposed the order to be, Clement the successor of Peter. But Irenæus, Eusebius, Jerome, and Augustine contradict the above authorities, and say Linus succeeded Peter; Chrysostom seems to go the same way. Bishop Pearson has proved that Linus died before Peter; and therefore, on the supposition that Peter was bishop of Rome, Linus could not succeed him. Cabassute, the learned Popish historian of the councils, says, 'It is a *very doubtful question* concerning Linus, Cletus, and Clement, as to which succeeded Peter.' Dr. Comber, a very learned divine of the Church of England, says, 'Upon the whole matter, there is no *certainty* who was bishop of Rome *next to the apostles*, and therefore the *Romanists* (N.B. the Romanists!) build upon an ill bottom, when they lay so great weight upon personal succession.'

"But who was the third bishop of Rome? for of the second there is no certainty to be had. Here the confusion is greater still. The Roman catalogues, the catalogues of High Churchmen, must have somebody; so they put Cletus in. Hear Dr. Comber again: 'The like blunder there is about the next pope (bishop of Rome): the fabulous Pontifical makes Cletus succeed Linus, and gives several Lives of Cletus and Anacletus, making them of different nations, and to have been popes at different times, putting Clement between them.'

"The fourth bishop of Rome is equally doubtful. Cabassute says, 'The whole question is very doubtful.' Prideaux, a learned Churchman, says, 'No certainty is to

be had.' Howel, a thorough Churchman, is of the same mind. Yet, this is the chain, every link of which is so distinctly ascertainable! Well might Bishop Stillingfleet declare that this succession is as muddy as the Tiber itself. Nor is this learned prelate the only one of his order who opposed this doctrine. Bishop Hoadley says, 'As far as we can judge of this, God's providence never yet, in fact, kept up a regular uninterrupted succession of rightful bishops.' Again: 'It hath not pleased God, in His providence, to keep up any proof, of the least probability or moral possibility, of a regular uninterrupted succession; but there is a great appearance, and, humanly speaking, a certainty to the contrary, that the succession hath often been interrupted.' Archbishop Whately maintains that there 'is not a minister in all Christendom who is able to trace up, with approach to certainty, his spiritual pedigree.' The eminent Chillingworth says, 'I am fully persuaded there hath been no such succession:' while Wesley declares, 'The uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove.'" *

It will be necessary here to glance at the consequences which must result from the truth of those opinions. Those who hold them invite our attention to this by stating what they believe to be the consequence of rejecting this doctrine. This they do thus: "Christ promised to be with His apostles and their successors, 'even unto the end of the world;' therefore, the fact of such succession must be affirmed, or we 'must admit that the church which Christ founded is no longer to be found upon earth, and that the promise of His protection has already failed.'" But a learned prelate has exposed the fallacy of this allegation. It "consists," he observes, "in confounding

* "Perilous Times," p. 273. See also vol. i. of this History, p. 552.

together the unbroken apostolical succession of a Christian ministry, and the same succession in an unbroken line of this or that individual minister." The existence of the former is a well established fact, and it is all that the Scriptures warrant us to expect.

But what must be the consequences to the Christian church of the truth of those dogmas? The first is sufficiently startling and undeniable. If this personal unbroken succession is maintained, then all the Christianity existing in the world has flowed to it through St. Peter. All the other apostles—even the great apostle to the Gentiles, with his unparalleled labours and sufferings—have failed to perpetuate any fruit. In no instance is there any church or people, according to this doctrine, the result of the labours of any other apostle than Peter, to whom every real Christian and Christian minister in the world must look up, as to his spiritual father. We know not how others may regard this; to us it is incredible.

But a still more frightful consequence must result from this hypothesis, if it be true. Not only does it deny to Methodist preachers the position of Christian ministers, and proclaim them to be unhallowed pretenders to a sacred office to which they are not validly appointed; but all the ministers of the Established Church of Scotland, all other Nonconformist ministers in England, multitudes in America and on the Continent of Europe, (amounting altogether, it has been estimated, to more than two-thirds of the ministers in Christendom,) are, if these doctrines be true, unauthorized teachers, wolves in sheep's clothing; and their flocks are no longer to be regarded as churches of Christ. No hallowed influence, according to this teaching, attends any of their ordinances. A scheme which leads to such con-

sequences as these, is seen at once to be as groundless as it is arrogant and uncharitable.

But our grand objection to this great perversion is yet to be stated. We hold the holy Scriptures to be the rule, and the only sufficient rule, for Christian faith and practice. Here, and here only, we look for just criteria to test the validity of any man's claim to the office of a Christian minister. Here we find ample directions bearing on every part of the case, so that churches and ministers, who honestly, and with singleness of mind, desire to act in accord with the will of the great Head of the church in heaven, may be saved from all error and be guided aright.

And contrary to Scripture.

The great objection to the bold and exclusive claim to a personal succession from the Apostles, therefore, is, that it has no warrant, sanction, or support from this infallible rule which Christ has given to His church; but is decidedly opposed to it. It is undoubtedly true, that we read in the New Testament of deacons, presbyters, (πρεσβύτεροι,) and bishops (ἐπίσκοποι). But it is equally certain that the two latter terms were applied to the same class of ministers. As, for instance, Acts xx. 17–28, where Paul, addressing the presbyters of Ephesus, says, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you" (the presbyters) ἐπισκόπους, "bishops" or "overseers." Many other passages might be quoted in proof of this point, as indeed might many also from the early fathers to the same effect. Thus Jerome distinctly affirms, "A presbyter is the same as a bishop." The doctrine of the three orders, as being separate and distinct, is therefore sanctioned neither by Scripture nor by Christian antiquity. Much less is the personal succession, in the manner supposed by Popish and modern Anglican

Church writers, promised, affirmed, or intimated in any manner whatever.

Having referred to Holy Scripture as the only sure and certain rule for judging of the validity of a minister's claim to that sacred office, we are prepared to act consistently, and to apply this test fairly and fully to the case of the Methodist preachers, as they stood before the world from and after the Conference of 1797. In doing this, no unauthorized course is taken. It is the direct injunction of the holy record, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." And the reason which is assigned for this injunction, namely, "Because many false prophets are gone out into the world," clearly shows that it was intended specially to apply to such an examination of the claims put forth by any man or body of men, as would satisfactorily ascertain whether they are really ministers of Christ, or mere pretenders to that sacred office.

Scriptural test of ministerial character.

It is by no means an unimportant circumstance that the opposition which the apostles had to encounter led them to defend themselves in their twofold character, as apostles and as ministers of Christ. And in each case we find that the proof is drawn from *character* and *usefulness*. When the great apostle of the Gentiles moots the important question, "Am I not an apostle?" what is the answer? "Have I not seen the Lord?" But this of itself would afford no proof of the fact to which he had adverted; for hundreds of persons were still alive who had seen the Lord, but who, nevertheless, were not apostles. It was necessary that he should have seen the Lord, in order that he might from Him receive the apostolic commission, and be a witness of His resurrection; but the proof of his sustaining this office was not in his having received the appointment, but in the success of the mission he had received, in the

salvation of perishing men. Hence he adds, "Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet *doubtless* I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." (1 Cor. ix. 1, 2.) He had not only seen the Lord, and been sent forth by Him; he had delivered His message with fidelity and effect; and he therefore with confidence adduces those who had been brought to an experience of salvation by his word, as the "seal of his apostleship." This shows the kind of evidence by which any claim to the character of a Christian minister is to be sustained. For if Paul did not refer for the proof of his apostleship to *his* most extraordinary call and divine appointment, but to the fruits of his ministry, few others will have reason for taking a different course.

It is accordingly found that all the scriptural directions given on the subject are in harmony with this language of the apostle. The first thing insisted on is that the pure evangelical truth be preached. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Gal. i. 8.) "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." (2 John 9, 10.) "Approving ourselves as the ministers of God...by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left;...as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich." (2 Cor. vi. 4–10.) It will be seen that in none of these important portions of holy writ, bearing

immediately as they do on the vocation and work of the Christian ministry, is there any allusion to any particular appointment, or ordination: on the contrary, the things which they pre-eminently set forth as essentials, are purity of doctrine and purity of life, and spiritual success. But while thus insisting on the scriptural necessity of pious character, and purity of doctrine, and some measure of fruit, in all those who act as ministers of Christ, Methodists by no means overlook the necessity of a divine call, and of a call from the church, to this sacred office. None recognise more fully than they, that "no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God."

Manner of selecting and appointing Wesleyan ministers.

We will now briefly describe the manner in which persons are appointed to the office of the ministry in the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

All such are first members of the Society, and are selected as persons who have previously given evidence of decided piety, and manifested talents for public usefulness by Christian teaching. And, it may be observed, this evidence is not presented to strangers by any profession or examination; it is given to the immediate neighbours and friends, to those among whom the person lives, who at the same time witness his every-day conduct in the world, and hear him every week speak of the dealings of Christ with his soul.

The man whose piety and talents produce such an impression on the elders and experienced members of the Society to which he belongs, is requested occasionally to give a word of exhortation; and when it is ascertained that he feels it to be his duty to engage in a more important and public way of usefulness, he is usually placed, as a local preacher on trial, on the Circuit Plan. In this

position he continues for a longer or shorter period, from six to twelve months, preaching in the country and village chapels of his Circuit, according to Plans prepared by the superintendent preacher. At the expiration of the appointed period of probation, his case is brought before the Local Preachers' Meeting by the superintendent. The candidate is then examined respecting his conversion and call to preach, his views of Christian doctrine, and his approval and observance of Wesleyan Methodist discipline. This examination takes place, and the answers are given, in the presence of the local preachers assembled, who have every opportunity of knowing the manner of life and moral bearing of the person, and of learning, from experienced members of Society in different parts of the Circuit, the character and effects of his preaching. If, after having heard this examination, the Local Preachers' Meeting and the superintendent are not satisfied of his suitability to fill the office of local preacher, he is either rejected or kept longer on trial, as the case may require; but if they are satisfied on this head, he is received fully as a local preacher, and, as such, in common with all his brethren, his name is called over at every quarterly Local Preachers' Meeting, in connexion with the inquiry, "Is there any objection to his moral character, doctrine, abilities, attention to his appointments, and the discipline of the body?"

When any young man who has passed this ordeal, and by his capacity, zeal, piety, and usefulness, produces an impression on the preachers and the people that he is called of God to be wholly separated to the work and office of the Christian ministry, and it is found that his own views and feelings are in accord with this impression, he is regarded as a candidate for that sacred office. It is thus very evident

that the Wesleyan economy is peculiarly adapted to carry out one very important apostolic direction respecting the selection and appointment of ministers. Paul, writing to Timothy on this subject, says, "And let these also first be proved." (1 Tim. iii. 10.) We do not stay to inquire how this can be done, where a person is never allowed to preach until after he has been ordained a minister; but it is manifest that, in the case before us, there is precisely that testing of character and ability for the work which the great apostle required.

Still, two parties must concur in judgment on every such case, before the person can take one step in his progress to the ministry. The superintendent minister is alone competent to recommend a person to the Quarterly Meeting as a candidate for the ministry; but no person can be accepted as such by the District Meeting, unless the March Quarterly Meeting of the Circuit to which he belongs formally approve of such recommendation. So that, before any man can be placed in the way of access to the Wesleyan ministry, the superintendent of his Circuit on the one hand, and the largest and highest church meeting of his Circuit on the other, must concur in judgment that he is a suitable person for that sacred office. Surely this is a most important means for preventing improper persons intruding into the ministry. The senior pastor must approve his piety and ability, and the best informed of the people be satisfied that he is adapted to proclaim God's truth with effect, and to feed them with "the sincere milk of the word."

Having been thus recommended by the superintendent, with the approval of the Quarterly Meeting, he is expected to attend the ensuing District Meeting, where he is subjected to another examination, of which the following is

given in the large Minutes as the basis:—"Do they know God as a pardoning God? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation? Have they gifts as well as grace for the work? Have they a clear sound understanding? Have they a right judgment in the things of God? Have they a just conception of salvation by faith? And has God given them an acceptable way of speaking? Do they speak justly, readily, and clearly? Have they had any fruit of their labour? Have any been truly convinced of sin, and converted to God, by their preaching?"

Wesley, when he left this series of interrogatories for the examination of candidates, added, "As long as the above marks concur in any one, we believe he is called of God to preach. These we receive as sufficient proof that he is moved thereto by the Holy Ghost." Afterward, a more enlarged and comprehensive series of questions was prepared, which is substantially the doctrinal and disciplinary examination still in use.*

When a candidate has passed these examinations acceptably, his name is placed on the List of Reserve, and he is appointed to a Circuit when a vacancy occurs. He has then to labour four years on trial; and during that period, at every annual District Meeting, the chairman of the District examines him as to his course of theological reading during the past year; and every such candidate is required to deliver to the chairman a list of the books which he has read since the last District Meeting. At the end of the fourth year, the probationer is again subjected to another careful examination at the District Meeting. In case this is satisfactory, the chairman reports to the Conference, and the preacher is received into

* See Appendix L, at the end of this volume.

"full Connexion," and recognised as a minister of Christ.

Further arrangements have since been made, but the above account details the usage which followed the regulations of 1797, with some additions introduced on the recommendation of Mr. Joseph Entwisle in 1802.

This course sufficiently proves the scriptural character of the Wesleyan ministry.

The calm and serious attention of the Christian reader is earnestly called to the above simple and truthful account of the manner in which ministers are appointed to the sacred office in the Wesleyan Methodist Church; and it is confidently asked, Where is there, among all the churches of Christendom, a more scriptural or consistent practice in operation? No Popish or semi-Popish objections have the weight of a feather with us. "To the law and to the testimony" we readily and unreservedly bow; and if this authority is allowed to be supreme, we boldly maintain that, if there be any Christian ministers in the world, the Wesleyan Methodist preachers are of the number.

But it is objected further to the church *status* of Methodism, that the sacraments administered in this communion have no real sacramental efficacy. Of the various objections put forth to enforce this allegation, the principal one is, that the Methodist preachers cannot consecrate the elements; but when we ask, Why? the answer is, "Because they are not episcopally ordained." As, therefore, we have proved them to be scriptural ministers of Christ, it must follow that whatever the ministers of Christ can do, they can do. As to consecration, the New Testament knows of none, except the separation of the elements to their intended use with prayer and exhortation. This subject, therefore, fully depends on the preceding, and need not be further discussed. We maintain that the ministers of the Wesleyan Connexion are, in every sense, scriptural minis-

ters, and as such are competent to perform every ministerial act, including the administration of the sacraments. We are assured this conclusion cannot be successfully impugned by scriptural authority.

Second class of objections to Methodism, on account of its organization and ministerial rule.

Having thus far defended the ministers and institutions of Methodism from the arrogant pretensions of High Churchmen, we have now on their behalf to repel the violent assaults of Low Dissenters. These occupy different ground, and urge objections of a totally different character from those previously noticed. One with Wesleyans in doctrine, and not very different from them in their mode of worship and general organization, they place themselves in antagonism to the body, alleging that its government is despotic, and deprives its members of their just scriptural rights.

Before entering on a brief discussion of these topics, it may be necessary to observe, that no claim is put forth by Wesleyan Methodists for the perfection or divine appointment of their polity: it is only in self-defence that they endeavour to show that the system of their choice is reasonable and in accordance with the intimations of Scripture. In discharging this duty on the present occasion, we desire to call attention to two principles which are assumed as self-evident and scriptural by all the aggressors on Methodistic government to whom we now refer. These are, that the people form the seat and centre of power in the Christian church, and that this power is best exercised in the way of representation.

Unsound assumptions made by these opponents of Wesleyanism.

Are these principles sound? Is it, for instance, a fact sufficiently established by "Scripture evidence," that all the members of Christ's body are equal; and that the various officers of it should act by the general approbation and appointment of the people?

That the church should be fully united as one body, is fully admitted; but where is it written, that the appointment to office in the church is of scriptural right vested in the people? This is called "purity of principle;" every thing contrary to it is branded as tyranny! But where is the scriptural proof? The ablest writers in support of these views, when they attempt this, in default of any direct Scripture evidence, seek support from "analogy between secular and ecclesiastical government." But in forming our views on this subject, it should be kept in mind that the church is emphatically "the kingdom of God," and, as such, "is not of this world." Analogy, therefore, does not meet the case, and proof of any direct kind from the sacred record has not been, and cannot be, adduced. We therefore join issue on this fundamental principle, and deny that in the Christian church all power and appointment to office are of right inherent in the people as a whole. For this reason, also, we reject every plea for a sort of political representation, as a church right, and a necessary element in the government of the church. If the people are not in possession of power, they cannot impart it to a representative: these principles must stand or fall together.

Practical inapplicability of democracy to church polity.

It will not, of course, be expected that we should attempt to prove a negative, by showing further, that these principles have no support from the teaching of the New Testament; but we may point out what appears to be unreasonable in their operation. Let us select a Class, such as is found in every section of the Methodist family; composed, say, of about twenty individuals. Here is one of superior judgment and mature piety, who is called "the leader;" with several others of sterling piety and unblameable behaviour, who are glad to avail themselves of his instruction and advice: here, also, is a half-hearted professor,

a backslider in heart, a penitent inquirer after mercy, one who joined the Society under deep religious impressions, which he has allowed to pass away, and he is now lifeless and apathetic; and there are two or three youths recently converted to God, who seem to think of nothing but the smile and love of their Heavenly Father. This little company can meet, for the purpose of spiritual edification, with the greatest propriety, and in confident expectation of the most blessed results. But let some weighty, difficult, embarrassing matter of discipline or government arise; are we to take these several persons as precisely equal in their ability to decide on such a case? Can it be the most excellent way to congregate together a great number of such Classes for the decision of such a difficult matter, and refer it to the votes of all present, when it must be evident that many of them are altogether incompetent to judge of the case? But we shall be told, that in a well-ordered Christian community, the best-informed and judicious part of the meeting will be sufficient, in every case, to procure a wise and just decision. It may not always be so. Persons are not unfrequently earnest and obstinate in proportion to their ignorance and incapacity. But, granting the allegation to be true, is it not then patent that the sage and experienced alone ought to have settled the business? Have not the minds of those to whom God has not given the gift of "governments" been unduly excited and harassed, and to no good purpose? If in such a case, by the influence of the intelligent members, a sound and sensible decision is obtained, it is not by means of the democratic constitution of the meeting, but in defiance of it.

It will, however, be said, that the course recommended is substantially that suggested above, namely, allowing the most

sensible and intelligent of the members of the church to decide these difficult matters, as representatives of the whole body. This plan, however, according to the views we entertain, is unsound in principle, and rests on assumptions which are untrue. We are told that, as a representative, the leader should fairly give the sentiments of his Class. He, therefore, their teacher and superior, is thus bound to consult those whom from week to week he instructs and reproves, and to adulterate his own opinion and judgment by infusing their inexperience and ignorance into the vote which he has to tender. It will be seen and recognised, by every spiritually-minded man who has studied the subject, that there is not the remotest analogy between this kind of representation and that which obtains in commercial and political affairs. A company of persons, who have invested a large sum of money in an enterprise, elect a few men to represent them in watching over their interests and managing the concern. These are bound not only to promote the best interests of their proprietary, according to their own judgment, but to some extent to consult the wishes, and to be influenced by the judgment, of such proprietary. So, when a man is sent as a representative to Parliament, he is very frequently selected on account of some expression of his political views, or the enunciation of some party creed. Having been chosen on these grounds, he is bound to be consistent, and ought to hold himself responsible to his constituents for his fidelity.

Secular and political analogies fail.

Something very similar to this may obtain in the case of a steward in a religious Society, who is intrusted with the disposal of funds for religious purposes; but in respect of spiritual offices, involving spiritual duties, we regard the case as totally different. Here, whatever may be required of the people in the way of submission and consent, the

This opposition to Methodist polity not sustained by scriptural proof.

authority to make the appointment does not arise from them and ascend upward, but comes from the Head of the church and descends downward.

A striking exhibition of this view is given by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xii., where the united church is compared to a human body, and the different offices and operations to be performed are represented by the different members of the body, for the purpose of showing the unity of the whole, and reproving any approach to complaint or murmuring in those who occupy an inferior position, as well as to check any tendency to pride or vain-glory in those who are placed in more prominent stations. And it is observable that we are not left, even from the obvious sense of the figure, to infer that the members did not agree among themselves as to the places they should severally occupy, but are distinctly told, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him." (Verse 18.) Does not this language, in its connexion, positively teach that a person's position in the church, as an active worker for its good, is determined immediately and specially by God, and not by the vote of a meeting? If it be answered, that all that is intended is to maintain, that the people only discern, recognise, and carry into effect the divine will; we again ask, Where is this *vox populi, vox Dei,* doctrine taught in the New Testament? Nothing can more clearly show how hardly the advocates of this view are pressed for scriptural proof of these popular elections, than the fact that they are compelled to cite the appointment of Matthias to the apostleship by lot, in the presence of the one hundred and twenty disciples, before, indeed, the church was formed by the giving of the Holy Ghost, and when in fact there was no election at all, but the matter was referred immediately to

All appointment to office in the church divine.

the decision of God; and it is very doubtful whether this was by divine direction, or met with the divine approval; for no further mention is made of Matthias as of the twelve apostles. Yet this is the only instance that can be cited from the New Testament.

But if this view of the case could be sustained, would it justify the pretensions set up, that all officers and ministers in the church, being appointed by the people, are responsible to them? If the people only recognise and admit the endowment and appointment of God, on what scriptural ground is this right claimed? On what reasonable ground? Leaders and local preachers are selected and placed in office because of their superior ability and gifts. Ministers are taken from these on account of their still more eminent endowments. Yet, according to this theory, the greater are to be responsible to, and judged by, the less. Without some specific scriptural authority we cannot receive such views, however they may be smoothed by choice phrases culled from the vocabulary of political democracy, or their opposites be condemned as priestcraft and tyranny.

In the absence of all explicit scriptural teaching, we should steadily adhere to this determination: but this is not our position. There are directions and authoritative teaching in the New Testament on this subject. In the chapter already referred to, we are told, "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." "God hath set;" that is, as Barnes explains it, "has appointed, constituted, ordained." Again: "But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ...And He gave some, apostles; and

some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ephes. iv. 7, 11, 12.) Here also we have the same assertion of the divine appointment of the persons who filled the several offices in the church. Nor is the information afforded by the writings of this apostle less explicit as to the agency in the church, by which persons so graciously qualified for respective positions of usefulness are to be recognised and formally placed in office; but this is not spoken of as a majority of the church. Paul, writing to Timothy, reminds him of his solemn designation to the sacred office in these words: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery:" (1 Tim. iv. 14:) which, taken in connexion with another reference to the same subject, (2 Tim. i. 6,) shows that he was appointed to the sacred office by the apostle in conjunction with several presbyters; but no mention is made of the people, or of their co-operation. Further, the apostle gave to this young minister a most elaborate and exact detail of the qualifications which should be found in all who desired to be ministers of the Gospel; (1 Tim. iii. 1–10;) and also pointed out the duty of the church toward those who sustained the sacred office. He then adds, "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure." (1 Tim. v. 21, 22.) A host of commentators, and amongst them Whitby, Macknight, Pyle, Dr. Adam Clarke, Hewlett, Benson, Wesley, and Barnes, suppose this injunction as to the laying on of hands

This divine appointment discerned and carried into effect by the ministry.

to refer to the ordination of ministers, or the appointment of persons to offices in the church. And if so, this very solemn charge will serve to prove that Timothy was responsible to God for the right discharge of this duty. He might consult and take advice on the subject, and perhaps ought to do so; but no one, giving fair weight to the apostle's words, can suppose that the selection and appointment of such persons belonged of right to a popular assembly, in which he might sit as an assessor, simply to register their will. This opinion is further confirmed by a similar injunction in the Second Epistle: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (ii. 2.) "This," Barnes justly observes, "is a clear warrant for ministers to set apart others for the sacred office." We refer specially to this commentator on this subject, not that we particularly approve of his views, but, on the contrary, because those who advocate the opinions which we controvert, regard him as their great authority.

The entire scope of the Epistle to Titus is to the same effect. He also is spoken of as invested with authority to supply what was wanting, and to rectify what was amiss. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." (Titus i. 4.) Then follow directions for judging of the characters of such persons; after which the apostle says, "For there are many unruly and vain talkers, whose mouths must be stopped." (i. 10.) And again: "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition reject." (iii. 10.) With all these scriptural proofs of ministerial authority and responsibility before us, are we to believe that the people everywhere were invested with supreme power in the church, and

exercised a rightful *veto* on all the appointments and disciplinary action of Christian ministers?

But it is confidently asserted that the New Testament speaks of "a higher court of legislation,—a council or synod," and that "in its constitution we see the ministry and laity combined." The plea for this is drawn from the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which, it is dogmatically asserted, sustains the above allegation. We shall be quite willing to place the entire question on the truth of this assertion, which, notwithstanding the positiveness with which it is made, is utterly erroneous.

Bearing of the apostolic decision (Acts xv.) on this point.

The reader, by turning to the sacred text, can satisfy himself as to this important matter. First, it is clearly stated, (verse 2,) that the church at Antioch did not refer the case to the members of the church at Jerusalem for decision. For anything that appears in the narrative, they might have thought themselves as competent to decide the question as their brethren in Judea. The language of the sacred text clearly says, "They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them, should go up to Jerusalem"—unto the church there? Certainly not, but—"unto the apostles and elders about this question." When they arrived, it is true that they were received of the church, and of the "apostles and elders," (verse 4,) and to this united meeting they declared the subject-matter of their inquiry. It is equally clear that there and then "certain of the Pharisees which believed"—whether simply members or elders, we cannot tell—"rose up," and maintained that "it was needful to circumcise" the Gentile believers, "and to command them to keep the law of Moses." (Verse 5.) But then it is certain, that this mixed meeting did not decide the question. For, in the verse which immediately follows, it is said, "And the apostles and elders came together for to

consider of this matter." (Verse 6.) Upon this verse Dr. Adam Clarke observes, "This was the first council ever held in the Christian church; and we find that it was composed of the apostles and elders simply." And this council decided the case under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the authority of revealed truth.

But then it is urged, as if the fact were a triumphant refutation of the above statement, that the letters sent with greeting to the brethren of the Gentile churches were written in the names of "the apostles, and elders, and brethren." (Verse 23.) This is freely admitted: but what does it prove? The apostles and elders having met and given their decision on the case, we are told by the inspired narrator, in a new paragraph, that it "pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas." (Verse 22.) To the mind of any one accustomed to investigate questions of this kind, the case is remarkably clear. The messengers from Antioch were received by the whole church with the apostles and elders; when some persons, probably laymen, feeling a deep interest in the matter, delivered their sentiments respecting it. Then the apostles and elders formally met, considered the question, and gave their decision on it. The members of the church were then informed of this result, and, fully concurring in it, they united with the apostles and elders in accrediting messengers to the church of Antioch, informing them of the satisfactory settlement of the difficult business. This statement must not be taken as an exposition or commentary: it is in fact the precise statement of the text. For, in the following chapter, when these messengers went forth on their mission to the Gentile churches, it is said, "They delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were

ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem." (xvi. 4.) The case is, indeed, so clear, that Barnes, the most liberal of commentators, is constrained to say, "The apostles and elders deliberated on it, and decided it." Not only therefore does this case not give any support to the theory that the people of right form the supreme authority in the church: it fails to afford any countenance to the opinion that they are entitled to a co-ordinate power with the pastorate. In this very remarkable instance, although their presence is mentioned, and their concurrence in the judgment given very plainly stated, they are in the most marked manner isolated from the ruling power, which is repeatedly and emphatically stated to be composed of apostles and elders.

Entire failure of this theory.

Having thus shown reason for rejecting the principles on which the Wesleyan polity has been impugned as being opposed to the scriptural rights and liberties of the people, we proceed to the more agreeable task of pointing out the prominent peculiarities of the system as it existed in 1797, with the connexional reasons and scriptural authority by which they are supported.

Here we have to notice, in the first place, the view which the Wesleyan economy takes of the pastoral office, and the means it has devised to sustain its scriptural authority.

The Wesleyan view of the pastoral office, and the means employed to sustain its authority.

The position occupied by Wesley, as the head of the whole Connexion to the time of his death, was fully stated in the preceding volume of this work. In this capacity he undoubtedly possessed absolute power. He could admit and expel members or preachers according to his own will. This power was generally exercised through the Conference, or by the agency of preachers in the several Circuits, or after he had taken counsel with judicious friends. Still he unquestionably possessed this power. We are not now

defending the propriety of his retaining it, much less maintaining that this mode of government ought to exist in any matured Christian church; but simply stating the fact, that as Societies were formed, chapels built, and the Connexion arose into existence, this power gradually and almost imperceptibly accrued to Wesley, and he retained it to the day of his death.

Another fact of great importance is also patent, namely, that by the "Deed of Declaration" Wesley devolved this power on the Conference, meaning, as his letter to the first Conference after his death clearly shows, that it should be exercised in common by all the preachers who had passed their probation, and been received into full Connexion. The Conference was therefore entitled to exercise the power which the founder of Methodism had previously held. This has been stoutly denied; and it has been attempted to maintain that the local meetings, such as Leaders' Meetings, Local Preachers' Meetings, and Quarterly Meetings, exercised a sort of independent jurisdiction in their several departments and localities: the award of power by the Deed of Declaration from Wesley to the Conference is accordingly represented as a grant of authority to that assembly over the members of their own body; and, as a consequence, it has been asserted that all the interference of the Conference with the affairs of the people, in the way of legislation or government, from 1791, was so much arbitrary and unwarrantable encroachment of the preachers on the liberties and rights of the people.

It is scarcely necessary to do more than mention this extravagant allegation to any one possessing the slightest acquaintance with early Methodist history, in order to its refutation. But we refer to a few facts, to remove all doubt on this important point.

The local meetings referred to never had, during

Wesley's life, either legislative or executive power. They simply performed the several functions with which they were charged, and went no further. This will appear manifest from a very few references to the first volume of this work. From the outset of Wesley's career to his death changes were almost continually going on, occasioned by the development and expansion of the Connexion; but none of them arose from these so-called local jurisdictions. Circuits were originated and constantly altered, frequently no doubt with the consent, and sometimes by the desire, of the people; but the change was always made by Wesley or the Conference. In 1776, it was reported, that in Ireland some of the Leaders' Meetings were held without connexion with, or dependence on, the assistant preacher; "on which it was formally declared, 'We have no such custom in the three kingdoms: it is overturning our discipline from the foundations. Either let them act under the direction of the assistant, or let them meet no more.'"* So that the presence of the assistant, as Wesley's representative, or acting under his immediate direction, was essential to the existence of these meetings. When visiting Dublin in 1771, Wesley found the Society in great disorder, and on inquiry discovered the cause to be a want of attention to the fundamental rule just referred to: he accordingly drew up a paper defining the several duties and offices of leaders, stewards, and Leaders' Meetings, which is decisive as to their having no legislative or independent power.† Nor are we left in ignorance as to Wesley's purpose concerning the government of the Connexion after his death. Speaking of his great power and his manner of exercising it, he says, "You seem likewise to have a wrong idea of a Conference. For above six

* See vol. i. of this History, p. 668. † *Ibid.*, pp. 672–674.

years after my return to England there was no such thing. I then desired some of our preachers to meet me, in order to advise, not control, me. And you may observe, they had no power at all, but what I exercised through them. I chose to exercise the power which God had given me in this manner, both to avoid ostentation, and gently to habituate the people to obey them when I should be taken from their head."* And this plan and purpose he consistently and constantly pursued, so that if at any time we wish to know the real nature of Methodist discipline, or the terms of Methodist law, we must refer, not to records of local meetings, nor even to Wesley's Works, but to the Minutes of Conference. It is therefore an undoubted fact that Wesley exercised this power during his life, and at his death transferred it to the Conference. And this fact, which many have ignorantly or factiously denied, one of the ablest of the censors of Wesleyan Methodism admits and laments.† We see, therefore, that the various institutions of Methodism were brought by Wesley under the cognizance of the Conference, and "were defined and established then, or afterwards laid aside, or modified, as the case required; that the Society submitted to the government of Mr. Wesley and the preachers associated with him, and became in course of time accustomed to look up to Mr. Wesley and the preachers assembled in Conference, as the supreme authority; and that the Deed of Declaration, by securing to the Conference its right of appointing to the chapels after Mr. Wesley's death, did, in point of fact, confirm it in possession of all its powers and prerogatives, as the supreme authority of the Connexion." ‡

* Wesley's Works, vol. xiii., p. 133.

† Rev. W. Cooke's "Wesleyan Reform," &c., p. 27.

‡ Dr. Beecham's "Constitution of Methodism," p. 30.

The effects which the legislation of 1795 and 1797 had on the constitution of Methodism.

The preceding chapter has traced the progress of the struggles which arose soon after Wesley's death until their termination in 1797. We are now concerned to know the effect which these arrangements had upon the constitution of Methodism.

The first cause of disquiet, and the question most keenly contested, was of a spiritual nature; namely, the administration of the sacraments in Methodist chapels by Methodist preachers. This, as we have seen, was settled in a manner which, while it made no formal separation from the Church, enabled every Society which earnestly desired it, to have the sacraments administered by its own preachers. This measure so fully met the case, that in a few years the administration of the sacraments in Methodist chapels was all but universal. And so one principal obstacle to the church *status* of the Connexion was removed.

The other changes mainly related to connexional discipline. As we have said, the Conference was left by Wesley in possession of supreme—it is hardly too much to say, absolute—power. The questions therefore arose, Is this full amount of power to be retained? Can its exercise be so modified and guarded, that the people may have entire confidence in its temperate and judicious administration? As we have shown in the last chapter, the Conference believed that fidelity to the principles and policy of Wesley, a religious estimate of the scriptural rights and responsibilities of the pastoral office, no less than their firm conviction of what was necessary for the consolidation and perpetuity of the best interests of the Connexion, united to induce them to reject every proposal which would remove the supreme power in the Connexion from their body; whether this were attempted by the introduction of laymen into the Conference, or the giving of an independent

authority to any general or local meeting. This power was therefore preserved intact and inviolate.

On the other point the Conference was not only not inflexible, but evinced a readiness to give candid attention to any proposals for preventing an improper exercise of the power with which they were intrusted; and consequently great alterations and concessions were made in accord with the wishes of the laity.

The first important alterations were made, as previously detailed, in 1795, under the title of *the Plan of Pacification.* And, as might have been expected, the applicants having been in this instance almost wholly trustees, the disciplinary arrangements then made were mainly concessions to that class of Wesleyan officials; but these are preceded by a distinct recognition of the supremacy of the Conference. These regulations consist of eight articles, of which the following is a brief summary.

Substance of the disciplinary part of the Plan of Pacification.

The first recognises the rightful authority of the Conference to appoint preachers to Methodist chapels, and prohibits trustees from interfering with such appointments, or expelling persons so appointed.

The second provides that, if a majority of the trustees, or a majority of the stewards and leaders of any Society, believe that any preacher appointed for their Circuit is immoral, erroneous in doctrine, deficient in abilities, or that he has broken any of the rules, they have power to summon the preachers of the District, and all the trustees, stewards, and leaders of that Circuit; and if a majority of such meeting find such charge well founded, such preacher shall be considered as removed from that Circuit, and his place be supplied by the District Committee.

The third enacts that if any preacher so charged shall refuse to submit to such a trial, he shall be suspended until

the next Conference; and if any trustees expel from a chapel any preacher appointed by Conference on their own authority, the preachers appointed to that Circuit shall not preach in such chapel until the next Conference, or until such a trial takes place.

The fourth provides that if the trustees of their own authority expel a preacher from a chapel, the chairman of the District shall have power to call a meeting of preachers in the District, with such trustees of that Circuit as have not offended; and that if it appear to such a meeting desirable that a new chapel shall be built in that place before the next Conference, measures shall be forthwith taken for proceeding with such a building. But no step shall be taken towards such a building, before this meeting has been held.

The other rules mainly refer to the then existing troubles in the Connexion. The above provisions will be admitted to be very important, especially as to the protection which they afford the whole Connexion against the retention of improper persons in the ministry.

And of the regulations of 1797.

The regulations of 1797 are more numerous, as well as more varied in their range of subjects. The first section refers to questions of finance; the second, to other temporal matters.

With respect to finance, the Conference promised in future to publish full accounts, annually, of the disbursements of the Yearly Collection, and of the accounts of the Kingswood School. But the most important of these arrangements was that which required all bills for deficiencies to preachers, for which the Circuits could not provide, to be first produced in the Quarterly Meetings of such Circuits, and verified by the signature of the Circuit stewards. Previously, the preacher took his own account to the Dis-

trict Meeting, and it was surmised that sometimes extravagant demands had been made. By the plan now laid down, the account was first submitted where all the particulars of the case were known.

In the next section it was provided, first, that no Circuit should in future be divided, till such division had been approved of by the respective Quarterly Meetings. It was further enacted that no other temporal matter should be transacted by the District Committees, until the consent of the respective Quarterly Meetings had been given.

The third regulation provided that no person should be admitted into Society, after the Leaders' Meeting had declared such admission improper; and no one should be expelled for immorality, until such crime had been proved in a Leaders' Meeting.

The fourth declared, that no leader or steward should be appointed or removed from office, without the consent of the Leaders' Meeting; and that no person should be placed on the Local Preachers' Plan, without the consent of the Local Preachers' Meeting. Explanations were also here given of two rules previously made. The first of these stated that the rule which forbad any local preacher from preaching in any Circuit but his own, without a recommendation from the Circuit in which he lived, was intended to prevent unauthorized persons from giving invitations which would involve Circuits or individuals in expense. In the other, which related to the prohibition against calling meetings for the purpose of considering the state of the Society or Connexion, it was stated that, as the Leaders' Meeting is the proper meeting for the Society, and the Quarterly Meeting for the Circuit, other meetings are regarded as unnecessary and injurious;

but that, notwithstanding, such meetings might be held, when sanctioned by the superintendent, he being allowed to attend, if he wished to do so.

The fifth stated that the preachers had selected all the rules made before the death of Wesley, which they found permanently applicable to the government of the Connexion, and had "solemnly signed them," declaring their "approbation of them," and their "determination to comply with them."

The next regulation announced that the Conference had "determined that all the rules which relate to the Societies, leaders, stewards, local preachers, trustees, and Quarterly Meetings, shall be published with the Rules of Society, for the convenience of all the members."

Lastly, it was enacted, "That if at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new rule for the Societies at large, and such rule shall be objected to in the first Quarterly Meeting in any Circuit, and if the major part of that meeting, in conjunction with the preachers, be of opinion that the enforcing of such rule in that Circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit, it shall not be enforced, in opposition to the judgment of such Quarterly Meeting, before the second Conference. Nevertheless, the Quarterly Meetings rejecting a new rule shall not, by publications, public meetings, or otherwise, make that rule a cause of contention; but shall strive by every means to preserve the peace of the Connexion."

Prominent elements of the constitution of Methodism after these changes had been made.

We shall now proceed to exhibit the constitution of the Connexion after these changes were made, and to inquire into its accordance with holy Scripture.

It is clear that not one of the alterations mentioned tended, or was designed, in any measure or degree, to affect or neutralize the connexional character of Methodism,

This remained intact in all its vigour. None of the changes, important as they were, gave independence of action to any Society or Circuit. The connexional principle was fully preserved, and with it, as a natural result, the itinerant system.

Secondly, it will be seen that none of these alterations, nor indeed all of them united, took away the ruling power of the pastorate, or in any degree altered the position of the Conference, as the fountain of law, and the supreme court of appeal.

Nor, thirdly, did these changes take away the authority, or in any measure diminish the efficient action, of the District Committees. Much controversy has been carried on respecting this topic, which we think might have been obviated by one simple consideration. The District Committees were appointed immediately after Wesley's death, to afford the Connexion in its several localities that effective supervision which had been lost by the death of the founder of Methodism. The District Meeting is therefore competent to do all that Wesley could do, with only this limitation,—that as he would act in consistency with himself, so the District Committee must act in consistency with the resolutions of Conference, and can only possess authority from one Conference to another. The terms of the original minute are: "The assistant of a Circuit shall have authority to summon the preachers of his District, who are in full Connexion, on any critical case, which according to the best of his judgment merits such an interference.....And their decision shall be final till the meeting of the next Conference." *

It is clear, therefore, that the notion which has been entertained by some persons, that this District Committee

* Minutes, vol. i., p. 241.

was only intended for the trial of an accused preacher, is altogether a mistake: the minute gave the superintendent of any Circuit power to summon such a meeting "*on any critical case.*" And this view is confirmed by the fact, that as soon as the arrangement was made, and Dr. Coke was appointed to preside at the next Irish Conference, we find this minute: "No letters of complaint, or on Circuit business, shall be written to England on account of this appointment. The Committees of the Districts shall determine all appeals whatsoever during the intervals of Conference: and therefore all applications on Society business during the said intervals, which cannot be determined by the assistants of the Circuits, shall be made to the Committees only."* This minute clearly shows, as Dr. Beecham has well observed, "that Dr. Coke, although their president, was not intended to fill Mr. Wesley's place as general superintendent; that the new jurisdiction of the District Committees was appointed with that view; and that therefore they were to apply, not to Dr. Coke, but to the District Committees."† The Minutes of 1792 and 1793, bearing on this case, fairly interpreted, fully sustain this view.

Wesleyan Methodist polity, therefore, as established by preceding enactment and usage, and modified and settled by the Plan of Pacification and the regulations of 1797, left the Methodist United Societies a Connexion, under the government of the Conference as supreme, with District Committees in possession of all necessary power for exercising efficient superintendence in the intervals between the Conferences; all this authority being confined within certain prescribed limits, by various powers which

* Minutes, vol. i., p. 246.

† Dr. Beecham's "Constitution of Wesleyan Methodism," p. 24.

had been conferred on local meetings, principally composed of the laity.

The question which now arises will form the closing discussion of this chapter; namely, Is such a union of numerous congregations into one body, and governed in this manner, so scriptural in its organization as to be entitled to rank as one of the churches of Christ?

The Wesleyan connexional principle in full accordance with Scripture.

We will first consider the operation of this connexional principle. By this means all the several Societies, throughout the length and breadth of the land, make one body. Not only are the doctrines the same, the discipline the same, the laws, regulations, and mode of action the same, but there is a real and solid bond of union by the incorporation of the whole under one ruling head. All the great financial interests of the community are as united as the body, which, it is important to observe, is entirely unfettered by political or geographical boundaries. It contains within itself large and energetic tendencies to expansion, and its economy and government possess every appliance and provision for continued progress; so that, if favoured with the blessing of the Divine Head of the church, Wesleyan Methodism might, not only without any violence to its principles and economy, but without any alteration in or addition to its fundamental laws, spread the light and power of the Gospel throughout this kingdom, its colonies, and the world. It cannot be denied that these features are strikingly analogous to those predicated of the spiritual kingdom of God which Christ set up in this world. Compare this Connexion with any other church or collection of churches. Popery exhibits the subjection of all to the *dictum* of one would-be-infallible man. It does not, it cannot, exhibit the kingdom of God; but is as political, secular, and worldly as any other kingdom of the

earth. The Church of England, free in some measure from this objection, and possessing great and important means for extending and conserving the fruits of Gospel influence in this country and our colonies, yet has no machinery or means of extending the glad tidings of grace to other countries. Congregational and Independent churches must, from the fact of their isolation, be ill prepared for great and extended aggressions on the wickedness of the world. Wesleyan Methodism, therefore, whatever defects it may have, unquestionably possesses, in its connexional character, one of the most prominent features ascribed to the church of Christ in the New Testament: it stands before us as a manifestation of the kingdom of God.

But the important inquiry is, Does this union of congregations and Societies find any parallel or countenance in the New Testament? The contrary has been asserted. We have often been told that the believers in each town or city not only constituted one church, but actually met together for worship "in one place." But is this possible? In Jerusalem three thousand souls were converted on the day of Pentecost. Afterward, the number reached "five thousand." (Acts iv. 4.) After the death of Ananias, "multitudes of men and women" were added to these. (v. 14.) Still the work progressed: "The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." (vi. 7.) Before any buildings for Christian worship were raised, when all the power of the government and priesthood of Judea was opposed to the Christian cause, where could all these thousands, these multitudes, worship together in one building? The supposition is absurd; and the conclusion is inevitable, that these persons met in different localities,

sometimes in private dwellings, at others in those large upper rooms which had been plentifully provided in Jerusalem for passover occasions, and frequently at such places as could be procured in the surrounding villages.

The same course would undoubtedly be taken when the Gospel was successfully introduced into other Hebrew or Gentile cities. Hence we so frequently meet with such phrases as the following: "Priscilla and Aquila," and "the church that is in their house." (Rom. xvi. 3, 4.) "Nymphas, and the church which is in his house." (Col. iv. 15.) "Unto Philemon—and the church in thy house." (Philemon 1, 2.) These were certainly places where the word was preached, and where Christian believers assembled for worship, and from whence as centres the light of the Gospel radiated to other parts of these cities and of the surrounding countries. This progress would call for an increase of presbyters; and the increase of their number, after a while, and for the sake of order, led to the appointment of one of these to have the chief direction in each locality: these were the primitive bishops or overseers. Every one acquainted with the operations of Methodism will perceive that this sketch precisely indicates the Circuit action of the Wesleyan body.

It is manifest, then, that the primitive churches were a collection of several congregations associated together for the great purposes of mutual edification, counsel, and strength; having several ministers engaged among them in the preaching of the word, and in the instruction and care of believers. The Circuit arrangements of Wesleyan Methodism are, therefore, not only justified on the ground of utility, but are clearly analogous to the practice pursued by the apostles and the primitive teachers of our holy faith.

Beyond this important particular, primitive Christianity,

like Wesleyan Methodism, was connexional. This is seen in all the arrangements adopted for the government of the church. Paul, on his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, communicated with Peter and James. The manner in which this information is conveyed to us proves that Paul needed no recognition or authority from them. Strong in the assurance of the divine call to the apostleship, he declares, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Gal. i. 8.) Yet, at the first opportunity, he makes himself known to the apostles, and through them enables those who "knew not his face" to "glorify God in" him. (Verses 22–24.) The circumstances narrated in Galatians ii. afford more explicit evidence on this subject. The special revelation under which Paul acted when he put himself, and the converted Gentiles who were the fruits of his ministry, into immediate communication with the apostles,—his great care to avoid giving offence,—the circumcision of Timothy,—his controversy with Peter,—all stand out in proof of the connexional character of the primitive church. But for this, each congregation might have devised its own laws of action. But, no; this was not to be done: the pervading life of the body led to an identity of doctrine and practice, and required the adoption of measures applicable to the whole.

The remarkable case given in Acts xv. is still more important in its bearing on this subject. Men, we are told, came down from Judea unto Antioch, and taught the brethren, saying, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Paul, who did not regard himself as a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles, was then at Antioch: Barnabas, who was scarcely less than an apostle, was there also. Why, then, could not these

apostolic men, with the presbyters of Antioch, have settled this question at once? Upon every principle of Independency, or of national churches, this could and would have been done. But, no; the Christianity of the apostolic age, like Wesleyan Methodism, was a great Connexion; and, consequently, instead of settling this disputed point at Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were deputed to go up to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem "about this question;" in order that, at a central meeting of apostles and elders, the subject might be considered under the influence of the authority and teaching of holy Scripture, and thus an authoritative and permanent rule be elicited, for the guidance of the Christian church on that point in all places and times.

The connexional character of the apostolic church is further seen in all the regulations necessary to the appointment, recognition, and reception of ministers. The degrading and democratic notion, that the minister is paid by the people, and is therefore the servant of the people, and, as such, must be appointed by the people, had no place in the churches founded by the apostles, and reared up under their guidance. It is freely admitted, that persons appointed to this sacred office were required to be men *of good report*. A man whose conduct was such as to lay him under suspicion, would certainly have been rejected by the apostles. It was also necessary that they should "first be proved;" (1 Tim. iii. 10;) which seems to imply, that their gifts and graces in the work of the ministry should, before their full appointment, be subjected to the judgment of the pious members of the church. But, notwithstanding, in the apostolic church the authority of the minister to enter upon the sacred functions of his office was not derived from the people, but from the apostles and

elders. The church at Corinth was charged to receive Timothy as a minister of Christ, working "the work of the Lord." (1 Cor. xvi. 10.) The same church was required to receive Titus and another minister in love and honour. (2 Cor. viii. 18, 23, 24.) By the same authority Titus was sent to Crete,—not by the appointment of the people, but by that of the apostle. (Titus i. 5.) This is also the doctrine of the Epistles to Timothy, throughout. Here, then, is proved the connexional character of the primitive churches by the important fact, that ministers were assigned and commissioned to special and important duties in the several churches, not by the vote of the members of these particular churches, but by apostolic care and authority.

One further evidence of the connexionalism of the primitive churches, and illustration of its character, may be given, by saying that it extended to financial affairs. This will be received as a startling assertion by those who regard all the monetary arrangements of the church as modern inventions, and as altogether inconsistent with the purity and simplicity of the apostolic age. It is true that, in many respects, the objects for which ministers now appeal to the benevolence of Christian churches differ from those of primitive times; but this diversity does not affect the great principles involved. Was it left to the people of Corinth or Galatia to settle by a vote whether there should be collections made in those churches for helping the pious poor at Jerusalem? Nothing of the kind. The apostolic requirement is imperative: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them

will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." (1 Cor. xvi. 1–3.) Here are many very important points, deserving lengthened observation: we will, however, only glance at a few particulars.

1. The collection is appointed by apostolic authority: Paul "orders" it. This authoritative appointment is not confined to any particular locality; it is general: as it had been directed in Galatia, (which, it must be remembered, was not a town, but a province,) so it is commanded at Corinth.

2. This provision was to be made regularly and systematically on the Christian Sabbath,—*on the first day of the week.* Paul had no sympathy with those persons who think the contribution of money, even for religious purposes, too carnal a work for the Sabbath day. On the contrary, after taking one of the loftiest flights into the highest region of inspired revelation ever permitted to the mind of man,—after ranging through all the mysterious terrors of death and the grave, and contemplating all the wonders and glories of the resurrection and eternal life,—his holy soul turns at once to what in his estimation was a kindred subject, and he writes, "Now concerning the collection."

3. The apostle lays down the rule which is to regulate all Christian giving. The duty is placed before the people as of divine appointment. The amount of the contribution, therefore, is not to be measured so much by the views which the giver forms of the object contemplated, as by the extent of his means. He is to give "as God hath prospered him."

4. It is observable that while Paul does not leave to the judgment of the people whether the collection is to be made or not, he does clearly and distinctly admit their right to see that their contributions are properly applied.

And hence he says, "Whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send."

We need not stay to show how exactly all this accords with the views already propounded, which exhibit the Gospel church as the kingdom of God. Nor will it be necessary to dwell on the obvious and exact agreement of these principles and usages with those of Wesleyan Methodism. Reference must, however, be made to another branch of this subject, in which the connexionalism of the primitive church, and its accordancy with Wesleyan Methodist usages, are yet more strikingly seen. I refer to 2 Cor. viii. 12–14: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality." These words are part of an exhortation to liberality in the support of the Gospel ministry; and the principle laid down by the apostle is that of an equality of burden,—each being called to give according to what he hath, so that each church or society may contribute in proportion to its means. Every one knows that this is not the case either with the Established Church or with Dissenting churches in general. In both sections some congregations provide a splendid income for the minister, while others leave him in miserable poverty. This inequality is, however, guarded against as much as possible in the Wesleyan Connexion; at all events, an apparatus of arrangement is devised to meet this difficulty. The motto of the Contingent Fund might be: "Not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality."

It only remains to show the scriptural character of the

Ministerial rule asserted and commanded in the New Testament.

pastoral authority; and this has been in great measure done by our preceding remarks. A few confirmatory proofs may be here adduced. It will surely be sufficient to show that ministers are commanded to rule the church,—are held responsible for ruling it well,—and that this command is not given to any other class or set of officers or people in the church.

As to pastoral rule, the testimony of holy Scripture is explicit: "The presbyters which are among you I exhort, who am also a presbyter.....Feed the flock of God which is among you." (1 Peter v. 1, 2.) The Greek word which is here rendered "feed," literally means, "to perform the office of a shepherd towards a flock," namely, to feed or tend a flock, "to feed, tend, rule, govern." And this meaning is fully sustained by the sense in which this same word is used in other scriptures. In Matthew ii. 6 it is used in reference to the government of Christ, and is rendered, "shall *rule* My people Israel." In the Apocalypse it is several times found, (ii. 27; xii. 15; xix. 15,) and always in the sense of *ruling*. And that this is its true meaning, in the passage first quoted, is evident by what follows; for the apostle goes on to say, "taking the oversight thereof." This phrase clearly indicates that the sacred writer was speaking of "superintendency, direction, government." This conclusion is placed beyond all doubt by the sense in which the word rendered "overseers" was usually employed. Homer speaks of Hector as *episcopos* of Troy; and the same title was given to the officers who were charged with the organization of the states dependent on Athens. Indeed, it appears to have been the term currently used to signify "a guiding oversight in the public administration." We only add the following texts, as further proofs: "Take heed therefore to

yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." (Acts xx. 28.) "A bishop must be one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.) "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour." (1 Tim. v. 17.)

Several of these portions of Scripture not only command ministers to rule in the church, but indicate their responsibility on that account. But the following is decisive on this point. The apostle Paul speaks of the work of the ministry as the rearing up of a building. "As a wise master-builder," he says, "I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereupon:" for "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." Can any language more clearly teach ministerial responsibility?

On the other hand, we search in vain for exhortations to the people to watch over and to direct public affairs. We meet with no advices or directions for the conduct of public assemblies, or exhibiting their responsibility for the purity of the church. We find no admonitions of this kind, but we do find such as these: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." (Heb. xiii. 17.) "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow." (Heb. xiii. 7.)

We find, therefore, the claims of the Methodist pastorate, as exercised in their Conference, District Meetings, and

general superintendence of the Societies, fully sustained by the authority of holy Scripture. "But then," it is objected, "you invest the priesthood with Popish power, and make the laity nothing." It is most lamentable to know the extensive and fatal influence which this false and silly objection has exercised. Wesleyan Methodism make nothing of the laity! Who, or what, originated and brought into extensive usefulness the lay element, as we now see it acting in every direction? Do not the useful and energetic laymen, who by thousands are now seen filling up important offices in the church, owe their public existence to Wesley and to Methodism? Who first employed and organized local preachers, whose countless hosts every Sabbath humbly, but effectively, proclaim the truth of God in every part of the land? Who trained and taught leaders to watch over the souls of their brethren in Class-meetings? What agency made Prayer-meetings all but universal, and gave such a religious direction to Sunday-schools, that the teachers now—not satisfied with imparting to their children the knowledge of letters—imbue their minds with the saving truths of the Gospel? We boldly challenge the verdict of Protestant Christendom, whether every active, energetic, zealous layman does not owe a deep debt of gratitude to Wesley and to Methodism. If Methodism had done nothing else in the world, it would have achieved a glorious triumph by the emancipation of the minds of Christian laymen from the supineness and apathy which had covered the church for ages, and the opening up to them of a vast range of Christian usefulness.

Methodism pre-eminently favourable to the religious rights of the laity.

"Still," it is urged, "whatever practical good may have resulted from the system, its theory places the laity in vassalage and subserviency." This is altogether a mistake.

Theory of Methodism.

In agreement with Scripture.

The theory of Methodism is that of the New Testament. It regards the whole church as one body, according to the Scripture already cited: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular:" (1 Cor. xii. 12–30:) the body, of which the Spirit of Christ is the life,—the all-pervading, all-directing energy; giving harmony, unity, and power to all its parts. Of this body, the Wesleyan, guided by New Testament teaching, regards the separated ministry as the head under Christ to direct the whole system; yet not of lordly right, as isolated from the body; but in union with Christ, and united by a common interest and vital connexion with all the members. Indeed, the maxim of Methodism is, "A place for every man, and every man in his place;" and while each devotes himself to the duties of his own sphere, as unto Christ, there will be "no schism in the body."

Undoubtedly there have been exceptions to this state of spiritual health. Ministers have sometimes, from fault or infirmity, abused the powers with which they have been intrusted, and have given pain to truly devoted servants of Christ, and inflicted injury on His cause. On the other hand, we have seen very inferior members of the body arrogate to themselves unreasonable powers, and thwart and harass meek and humble-minded ministers. But this forms no more objection to the theory we have propounded, than it would be a valid objection to a fair description of a healthy human being, to say that a man had been seen so diseased that the members of his body could not perform their usual functions.

Having made these observations, it is important to observe, that Methodism does not assume the infallibility of any class of members in the body. Not only is the utmost scrutiny made before a minister is admitted, but

through all his ministerial life his morality, orthodoxy, and ability are not only open to impeachment, but liable to a trial in a court where the most able, influential, and pious lay members may sit and vote. It may be questioned whether any section of the church has done more to maintain the purity of its ministry, or to guard against any abuse of ministerial authority, than Methodism has done. Nor is there anything in the system to prevent the introduction of further provisions of this kind, when a necessity for them is shown. For, while it is maintained that the government of the church is mainly committed to ministers, it is fully admitted that the people have a perfect right to require that every reasonable means shall be taken to prevent any improper exercise of it.

Not only has this been done, but, acting in the true spirit of the theory above stated, Methodism has thrown around ministerial power, both in its collective and individual action, very important protective guards. Almost the whole of the regulations of 1797 are of this character. Whether they were all that was required, is a question which we are not now called upon to decide; but they recognise the scriptural principle which we most unhesitatingly assert, that while the responsibility of ultimate authority in the church is placed in the pastorate, the laity, according to the endowments with which the Divine Head has favoured them, and the posts of usefulness to which He has called them, have a scriptural right to exercise an influence on the government of the body. No course of action could more clearly recognise this principle than that taken by the Conference in 1795 and 1797.

Not only is the principle recognised, but all Circuit action, as well as every provision made for cases of emergency, is based on it. Those who insist on repre-

sentation and lay delegates, in their advocacy of such polity frequently not only misapprehend and mis-state the Methodist economy, but, as we believe, contravene the teaching of Scripture, and greatly err as to the scriptural means of securing a scriptural object. This object is undoubtedly to obtain the concurrent judgment and harmonious action of the whole church, that we may "be all of one mind." This is attempted in the economy before us, by blending the judgment of leaders, stewards, and trustees, in friendly consultation and combination in the general local direction of the Societies; and by giving to the lay section a power to suspend the operation of any new law for a year, when it is deemed unsuitable or improper.

Wesleyan Methodism a scriptural church.

Methodism, therefore, as consolidated in 1797, was not a schism wrought out by unauthorized teachers assuming ministerial powers; nor a ministerial aggression on the rights of the laity, consummated in the perpetuation of a spiritual tyranny; but, on the contrary, it stands before us as an honest and religious organization, conformed to the teaching, and made agreeable to the great principles, of holy Scripture, for the purpose of spreading the knowledge and saving power of the Gospel; and therefore is seen to be capable, while retaining all those scriptural principles, of adapting its plans to the different stages of society throughout the world, and to the end of time. As such, it has hitherto been eminently successful, and, although making no claim to perfection as an ecclesiastical economy, is entitled on every ground to rank as a great and influential section of the universal church of God.

BOOK V.

WESLEYAN METHODISM FROM THE DEATH OF WESLEY TO THE CONFERENCE OF 1816.

CHAPTER I.

WESLEYAN METHODISM FROM THE DEATH OF WESLEY TO THE CONFERENCE OF 1795.

METHODISM without Wesley—Agreeably to his dying Advice, the Preachers pursue their usual Course—Wesley's Will and Deed—The Conference of 1791—Discussion between the Conference and the Executors as to the Management of the Property—The Effect of Wesley's testamentary Deed—Difficulties respecting Dr. Whitehead's Life of Wesley—Coke and Moore's Life of Wesley published—Narrative of Methodist History resumed—Cause of Methodist Progress under such unfavourable Circumstances—Mr. Benson's Character and Usefulness—Mr. Bramwell at Dewsbury—Intolerance defeated at Southampton—Methodist Progress in Ireland—Dr. Coke's Mission Labours—He attempts a Mission to France—The Conference of 1792—New Proposals from Dr. Whitehead respecting the Life of Wesley—These inadmissible—Dr. Coke again visits America and the West Indies—Violent Persecution—Revival at Dewsbury—Unfavourable State of the Country—Mr. Benson's Defence of the Methodist Preachers—The Conference of 1793—Violent Assault on Mr. Adam Clarke—Great Revivals in Yorkshire—Halifax, Birstal, Leeds, Hull, and Sheffield—The Conference of 1794—Matthew Lanktree's Entrance on the Work of the Ministry—Joseph Entwisle at Colne—Mr. Benson's Visit to Cornwall—Remarkable Success of his Ministry—Its important Bearing on ministerial Character.

Methodism without Wesley

IN resuming our narrative of the progress of Methodism from the death of Wesley, the mind at first painfully feels the absence of him to whom under God the Connexion owed its existence. He who was the able, laborious,

and enterprising agent, by whose instrumentality this great work was originated, and principally directed for more than fifty years, was now taken away. The directing genius of the economy was removed; and our mind shares in no ordinary degree the feelings of the Methodists of that day, as we hesitate in our course with the inquiry on our lips, Can there be Methodism without Wesley? Having carefully followed the progress of his labours, seen his unparalleled exertions, and observed his unwearied oversight, directed as it was by consummate practical wisdom; to proceed with a record of the course of evangelical operations carried on by the Methodist preachers, and to mark the progress of the Connexion, in the absence of its founder, seems like entering upon a new and in some measure a desolate path. Yet upon this path we must enter, and endeavour to trace with equal interest and attention the labours of those who, deprived of the aid of their best earthly friend, were left with the divine assistance to prosecute this great work.

Agreeably to his dying advice, the preachers pursue their usual course.

On the decease of Wesley, the following letter, bearing date the day of his death, was sent to the Methodist preachers throughout the Connexion:—

"LONDON, CITY ROAD, *March 2nd*, 1791.

"DEAR BROTHER,

"THE melancholy period we have so long dreaded is now arrived. Our aged and honoured FATHER, *Mr. Wesley*, is no more! He was taken to Paradise this morning, in a glorious manner, after a sickness of five days. We have not time to say more at present as to his demise,—only what respects our future economy. This injunction he laid upon us and all our brethren on his death-bed, That we each continue in our respective station till the time

appointed for the next Conference at Manchester. We have, therefore, no doubt but you will, with us, readily comply with his dying request; the more so, as this is consonant with the determination of the Conference held at Bristol, when he was supposed to be near death there, and confirmed in succeeding Conferences.

"We remain, dear Brother,

"Your affectionate, though sorrowful, Brethren,

"JAMES ROGERS, THOMAS RANKIN,
JOSEPH BRADFORD, GEORGE WHITFIELD."
JOHN BROADBENT,

This injunction was obeyed. The Methodist preachers everywhere pursued their course of duty, and, under a deep sense of increased responsibility, looked forward to the approaching Conference with the greatest interest, as though in it were involved the future destiny of Methodism.

Wesley's Will and Deed.

The day after the death of Wesley, his surviving friends thought proper to open and read his Will. From this document, which we have given at length,* it appears that Wesley had bequeathed all his property, consisting entirely of printed books and copyrights, to the Connexion, subject to the charge of a sum of sixteen hundred pounds, due by marriage settlement to his brother's widow and her children, and to certain conditions specified in the Will. The executors named were Messrs. John Horton, George Woolff, and William Marriott. All his manuscripts were given to Dr. Coke, Dr. Whitehead, and Henry Moore, to be burned or published, as they might think proper. Dr. Whitehead, who had from childhood been brought up among Methodists, became an itinerant preacher in 1764, laboured in the work of the ministry about five years, and retired from it

* See Appendix M, at the end of this volume.

in 1769. He then married, and settled in business in Bristol. From thence he removed to Wandsworth, near London, where he opened a school. He then became acquainted with Dr. Lettsom, two of whose sons were his pupils. Under this gentleman's direction he studied physic, and by his recommendation, having sometime before this become a member of the Society of Friends, he obtained from the late Mr. Barclay, an eminent Quaker, the appointment of guardian to his son. While his ward was pursuing his studies in the University of Leyden in Holland, Mr. Whitehead completed his own studies there, and returned to England with the diploma of DOCTOR OF MEDICINE, and, chiefly by the influence of the Friends, obtained the appointment of physician to the London Dispensary. At length, about the year 1788, he again offered himself to the Methodist Society, was kindly received by Wesley, and became a useful and respected local preacher in London.

Soon after Wesley's funeral, it was generally known that the executors intended without delay to administer to his Will, and to enter upon the performance of the duties of their trust. This fact led to the announcement, that subsequently to the execution of his Will,—which was dated February 20th, 1789,—namely, on October 5th, 1790, Wesley had executed a Deed, by which he gave "all his books, tracts, pamphlets, and stock in trade, and all his copyright to all books which he had already printed or might afterwards print, unto Thomas Coke, LL.D., Alexander Mather, Peard Dickenson, John Valton, James Rogers, Joseph Taylor, and Adam Clarke, to the intent that they should apply all the profits of the said books, &c., unto the sole use and benefit of the Conference of the people called Methodists, as established by a Deed Poll under the hand and seal of the said John Wesley, bearing

date the 28th day of February, 1784, and enrolled in His Majesty's High Court of Chancery." By this Deed the seven trustees therein named were requested and authorized, "with all convenient speed, to pay and discharge such debts as the said John Wesley should owe at the time of his death, out of the profits of the said books, &c.; and also to pay any legacies or annuities which he the said John Wesley should bequeath by will to any person or persons whatsoever."

The design of this Deed evidently was to secure, beyond a doubt, the proceeds of his property to the Connexion. It was at this time uncertain whether the Deed Poll would be sufficient to give such a legal constitution to the Conference, as would be admitted and recognised by the civil and ecclesiastical courts; and, in case of failure in this respect, his Will might not be sufficient to protect the property from the claims which might be made by the heirs-at-law. The absolute gift of the books, &c., to trustees was intended to prevent the possibility of such an occurrence. The bequests of the Will being recognised by the Deed, and the disposition of the residue of the property in both cases being the same, there was perfect harmony between the provisions of the two documents. As Dr. Coke was in America when Wesley died, all his manuscripts and letters were carefully sealed up, and delivered to the custody of Mr. James Rogers, the superintendent of the London Circuit. An inventory was also taken of all his books and stock, for the benefit of the executors and legatees.

The Conference of 1791.

The Conference of 1791 assembled at Manchester on the 26th of July. The number of Circuits in Great Britain and Ireland, which at the last Conference was 108, had now increased to 115. This increase was occasioned by

the following changes :—Chatham, Bradford, (Wilts,) St. Ives, the Dales, Campbeltown, and Kerry, ceased to be Circuits; while Rochester, Wells, Alderney, France, Bath, Penzance, Coventry, Oldham, Warrington, Dewsbury, Bridlington, Barnard Castle, and Hexham, became Circuits. The mention of France, as a Circuit having one preacher, excites attention. This preacher was William Mahy, a native of Guernsey, who had been brought to a knowledge of salvation under the preaching of Mr. John de Queteville. He laboured and suffered much in that country, and was instrumental in raising several Societies there. The immediate cause of this mission to France was the change which had but recently taken place in that country favourable to religious liberty, and which seemed to open up a fair field of usefulness there; but these prospects were soon clouded. War with France broke out in the beginning of 1793; and the fearful horrors that resulted from the revolutionary government, rendered this attempt to evangelize a part of that country nearly abortive. Richard Reece, so long and justly revered throughout the Connexion, was at this Conference received into Full Connexion. The increase in the numbers of the members this year was, in Great Britain, Ireland, and neighbouring islands, 800; in British America and the West Indies, 1,025: the numbers now reported being,—Great Britain, &c., 72,468; British America, &c., 6,525; giving a total of 78,993, under the care of the British Conference; and in the United States, 64,146, being an increase there upon the year of 20,881.

We find on these Minutes, for the first time, a list of reserve, that is, of preachers received on trial, who were not immediately wanted, but were subject to be called out as vacancies might occur. The number on this occasion

was fifteen. William Thompson was the president, and Dr. Coke the secretary, of this the first Conference after Wesley's death. The disciplinary arrangements, as well as the discussion relating to the sacraments, have been fully related in the preceding chapters. Dr. Coke was selected to visit the West Indies, and Committees were appointed to superintend Kingswood School, and for the examination of missionaries, and of the accounts, letters, &c., relating to the missionary work. Yet although the Conference was placed in a new and embarrassing position, and had many novel and very arduous duties to perform, it did not overlook its proper vocation,—a vigilant oversight of the spiritual interests of the people. This was evinced by a strong protest against conformity to the world, especially in regard to the employment of dancing-masters, and extravagant dress.

Mr. Wilberforce, then member of Parliament for the county of York, on this occasion sent to the assembled preachers a letter, accompanied with a present of copies of "The Evidence that appeared before a Select Committee of the House of Commons relative to the Slave Trade;" one copy for each member of the Conference, and two copies each for the president and secretary. In his letter, he complimented them on their piety and zeal, and entreated them to use their influence in getting petitions signed and presented to Parliament, praying for the abolition of the infamous traffic in slaves. The Conference sent him a polite answer, and promised to comply with his request. From a conscientious conviction of the enormous injustice and wickedness involved in this trade, the Methodist preachers entered heartily into the work, and were instrumental, in conjunction with other agencies, in producing a general conviction throughout the country,

that the time was come when the slave trade "ought to be abolished."

The executors of Wesley's Will went to Manchester during the sittings of this Conference, for the purpose of conferring with the preachers respecting the manner in which it would be most desirable for them to discharge the duties of their trust, and the debt of one thousand six hundred pounds with which the property was encumbered.

By the Will, the stock and the copyright of those tracts which Wesley had published in the latter part of his life, were left in trust to the three executors, for the benefit of the general fund of the Conference. His earlier works had been published so long, that the copyright had expired. By a very express clause in the Will, the executors were excluded from all control over the printing department, which was confided to a Committee of preachers. The types, printing presses, &c., were also given, not to the executors, but to two preachers, Thomas Rankin and George Whitfield, in trust, for the use of the Conference. These arrangements clearly showed that it was the testator's desire that the general direction of the business of the Book-room should remain where it had been previously placed, namely, with the Conference; the executors being charged only with the duty of seeing his debts and bequests paid, and then placing the residue of the stock and copyright at the disposal of the Conference for the benefit of the Connexion. This design was still more clearly shown by his subsequent "Deed," already mentioned. By this instrument, the stock and copyright of all the books and tracts which Wesley had published, or even might publish during the remainder of his life, were given to seven trustees,

for the same purpose as that named in his Will, with this difference, that, whereas in the Will the profits were directed to be applied to the *carrying on the work of God by itinerant preachers,*—a very general description, which would give great latitude in the application of the funds,—in the Deed it was expressly declared, that the profits should be applied to the above use, with this limitation, that it was to be "*according to the Deed of Declaration,* respecting the Conference, *which Mr. Wesley had filed in Chancery in the year* 1784."

The Conference, having fully considered the whole case, had no doubt that the printing, the distribution of the books, and the application of the profits, were designed by Wesley to be, as heretofore, under their direction. The seven trustees named in the Deed expressed their entire concurrence in this judgment, and declared themselves quite willing that this course should be pursued. The Conference then considered the best means of dealing with the debt of one thousand six hundred pounds with which this bequest was charged, and for which the executors under the Will, and the trustees named in the Deed, were both responsible. And, regarding it as more honourable to the memory of their deceased friend, they determined to borrow the necessary sum, and pay off this debt immediately, and then to do their utmost to reduce the stock, for the purpose of discharging the loan, and thus to realize the proceeds of the bequest for the benefit of poor Circuits, according to the design of the testator.

Discussion between the Conference and the executors as to the management of the property.

The Conference next deliberated how they should act in respect of the executors of the Will; and considering them to be very respectable men, and that they, as well as the trustees under the Deed, had a right to be satisfied that the property Wesley had left, and to which they had admi-

nistered, should be used according to the design of the testator, it was proposed, that the three executors should be incorporated with the preachers, in order that they might be present at the Conferences when the money should be disposed of; and that they should be members of the Committee in London for the regulation of the press and the examination of the accounts. Both these proposals were adopted by the Conference unanimously.

The three executors were then introduced into the Conference, when the president informed them of the resolutions which the Conference had passed respecting them and the property to which they had administered, adding, "We think this will be a safe and effectual way to fulfil the design of the testator." The executors, however, stated that, in their opinion, their authority was to be continued over the property, for the benefit of the Conference, as long as they should live, and therefore they could not comply with the proposal. The president replied, that certainly their authority could only extend to the property of which Mr. Wesley died possessed; and it could not extend to what might arise out of it by means of the preachers. The executors then promised to consider very fully what had been advanced, and to give their answer to it.

The next morning the three gentlemen again attended, and handed in a paper which contained the following statement: "Having maturely considered the situation in which we stand, as executors to Mr. Wesley, and trustees of his property, for the use of the Conference after payment of his debts and legacies, and being sworn in the Ecclesiastical Court faithfully to execute his Will, it is our opinion, that we cannot legally or conscientiously divest ourselves of the trust reposed in us, or extend its adminis-

tration beyond the designs of the testator. We are fully sensible that the Conference have it in their power to render the property of small value; but we trust that they will not come to any resolution of that kind, as whatever it may produce will be solely at their disposal, and we wish to afford them every assistance and support in our power toward carrying on the work of God agreeably to Mr. Wesley's design."*

When this paper was read in the Conference, one of the preachers said, "that he could not think it was Mr. Wesley's design, that they (the executors) should have the management of the property in the exclusive way then claimed, as he had executed a Deed which had placed that authority in the hands of seven persons, members of the Conference." To this, one of the executors immediately replied, "that they had taken advice respecting that Deed, and were informed that it was good for nothing; and that *any claim on that ground would be resisted.*" The president then informed the three gentlemen that the preachers were determined to give up the whole property, if the executors persisted in their refusal of the *union* proposed to them by the Conference, as they were certain the testator's design could in no other way be fulfilled. Upon this, further time for consideration was desired by the executors, who the next morning sent in the following note: "To meet the wishes of the Conference, we are willing *wholly* to give up our trust to them, after discharging the debts and legacies, *provided we can do it legally.* In order, therefore, conscientiously to divest ourselves of the charge, we will without delay take the opinion of the king's advocate, and one other eminent doctor of the civil law, whether it can be done; and if so, what will be the

* MYLES'S "Chronological History of Methodism," p. 200.

proper mode to be adopted." The assumption made in this note, that the Conference wished to get rid of the trustees, was incorrect. The preachers were well aware that the bequest could only be rendered of considerable value through their continued exertions and influence. While, therefore, they were perfectly willing for the executors to have every means of rightly disposing of Wesley's bequest, they were determined not to give them control over the enhanced value which it could receive only through the continued exertions of the preachers. The Conference then carefully considered this proposal of the trustees: and being fully satisfied that Wesley intended that the printing and the disposal of the books should be under their direction; that the utmost the executors could reasonably require, was to see that the profits were disposed of agreeably to the intention of the testator; and that this would be secured by the *union* which the Conference had recommended, while the preachers knew that the exclusive management asked for by the executors was altogether impracticable; the Conference, influenced by these reasons, resolved to relinquish their interest in the bequest entirely, which every legatee has of course a perfect right to do, rather than be embarrassed, and have the future action of their Book-room cramped by the interference of the executors.

The following reply to their note was therefore, the same day, sent to these gentlemen:—

"THE Conference beg leave to return the following answer to the executors of the late Rev. Mr. Wesley's Will, as containing their ultimate resolutions in respect of the business between them and the executors.

"I. They return the executors their sincere thanks for

the trouble which they have taken in coming down from London to Manchester on the business of their office.

"II. They inform the executors that they resign all their claim and right to the whole stock of books and pamphlets of which Mr. Wesley was possessed at the time of his death, into the hands of them, the executors.

"III. They will purchase the above-mentioned stock of the executors, (if the executors please,) at any time between this and the first of September next, paying to the executors such a sum of money as will be sufficient to enable them to discharge every obligation which may lie upon them on account of Mr. Wesley's Will."

The effect of Wesley's testamentary Deed.

Thus ended this singular negotiation. The executors were upright, honest men, who, having been informed by some incompetent lawyer that the Deed executed by Wesley was of no force, really believed themselves bound to exercise a complete and exclusive authority over the whole of the property which Wesley had bequeathed to the Conference; altogether overlooking the consideration that they could not possibly do this, without at the same time exercising entire control over property which would be constantly produced by the labours and influence of the preachers.

But these gentlemen were soon undeceived, and relieved from all their anxiety. On their return to London, they consulted the solicitor general, (afterwards Lord Eldon,) and the king's advocate, concerning Mr. Wesley's Will and also the Deed; when they were informed, *that the Deed was testamentary, and superseded the Will in respect to the books, copyright, &c.; being made subsequent to the Will.* The executors immediately informed the trustees of this decision; and they, without delay, announced this im-

portant change in the aspect of the business to the Connexion, in a circular bearing date "September 5th, 1791;" adding, in a postscript, "We have, since we printed the above, received the decision of the judge of the Prerogative Court, who has declared the Deed to be testamentary; but that the executors of the will must first appear before the court, and give up their probate; to which they have no objection." Thus terminated this connexional difficulty.

The trustees proceeded to take out letters of administration; and the entire disposition of the property passed to the Conference, with whom the trustees were identified, they having provided the means to the executors of discharging all their liabilities under the Will.

Difficulties respecting Dr. Whitehead's Life of Wesley.

This embarrassment having been removed, another soon arose,—it had, indeed, previously originated. A short time after the death of Wesley, a report was circulated that John Hampson, jun., who had formerly been an itinerant preacher in connexion with Wesley,* was preparing a Life of the founder of Methodism. As, from the *animus* under which Mr. Hampson had left the Methodists, it could not be expected that he would produce a candid and unbiassed Life of Wesley; it was thought proper immediately to begin the compilation of a memoir which should afford a fair and full exhibition of his life, character, and labours. The following notice was accordingly published throughout the Connexion:—"The executors of the late Rev. John Wesley think it necessary to caution his numerous friends and the public against receiving any spurious or hasty accounts of his life, as three gentlemen, to whom he has bequeathed his manuscripts and other valuable papers, will publish an authentic narrative as soon as it can be prepared for the press."

* See Vol. i., p. 530.

It was easier to make this announcement than to carry it strictly and literally into accomplishment. Of these "three gentlemen," two, Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore, were fully engaged as itinerant preachers, and devoted to the labours of their sacred calling with much more than ordinary zeal. The latter felt the claims of the ministerial office press so religiously on his conscience, that every other matter was made to bend to this paramount obligation. He was at this Conference appointed superintendent of the Bristol Circuit,—a post which not only removed him from London, where all Wesley's papers and manuscripts were deposited, but involved him in the most arduous and onerous duties. Dr. Coke was no less absorbed in ministerial labours: he was appointed at this time to visit the several missionary stations in the West Indies. The only gentleman remaining of the three, to whom the "manuscripts and papers" of Wesley had been bequeathed, was Dr. Whitehead. He was resident in London, and was now a local preacher, in whom James Rogers, the superintendent of the Circuit, had much confidence, and who, besides having competent learning, was much esteemed by all the parties. He was willing to undertake the task of writing a Life of Wesley, and was, all things considered, regarded as the most eligible person to undertake the important work. At Dr. Whitehead's earnest request, therefore, and with the consent of Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore, Mr. Rogers delivered to him the whole of Wesley's manuscripts and papers, that he might at his leisure select what was needful for his work, "the whole to be afterwards examined." As it could not be expected that a professional man could devote himself gratuitously to the performance of such a work, Dr. Whitehead proposed to Mr. Rogers that he should have one hundred pounds for his

trouble and loss of time in this case. Mr. Rogers brought this proposal under the united consideration of the executors and the Printing Committee, when it was determined to give the doctor one hundred guineas, as being a more handsome sum. This agreement was made about a week before the Conference of 1791.

It seems very strange that so important a step should have been taken immediately before the meeting of the Conference, where the subject was likely to be considered; but so it was. When, in the course of the deliberations of this body, the subject of Wesley's Life was introduced, much exception was taken to Dr. Whitehead as the biographer, principally on account of the known versatility of his disposition. Mr. Rogers, however, interposed in his behalf; and so far satisfied the Conference in this respect, that it confirmed the agreement which the Committee had made with Dr. Whitehead, and, to facilitate his work, appointed him a member of the London Book Committee. In making these arrangements, however, the Conference distinctly stipulated that Mr. Moore, in person, should examine the whole of Wesley's papers,* before any of their contents were published.

Thus far, all appears to have been well-intentioned and satisfactory, and probably would have continued so, but for the unhappy influence of persons who obtruded their advice on Dr. Whitehead in the character of friends. By these he was told that he ought not to regard his engagement respecting the Life of Wesley; "that the work would produce a great sum of money; that he might realize *two thousand pounds* by it; and that to be so employed for so small a sum as *one hundred* would be

* Mrs. Smith's "Life of H. Moore," p. 116.

an act of injustice to himself and his family." * The doctor unfortunately listened to this advice, and fell into the temptation.

He accordingly soon afterward avowed, that he would write the Life of Wesley as an independent man; that the copyright should be solely his own; and that, if it should be printed at the office of the Conference, he would have half of the clear profits. These, together with other conditions, were named in a letter which Dr. Whitehead wrote to Mr. Whitfield, the book-steward, on September 7th, 1791. To this the Committee appointed for managing the book department replied on the 9th instant, declining to accede to any of the doctor's proposals, but offering to double the remuneration agreed on, and, for the sake of peace, to make it two hundred guineas; or, in case this offer were declined, to appoint three of their Committee to confer with any equal number of Dr. Whitehead's friends, to "consider whether any other mode of accommodation, agreeable to both parties, can be struck out." On the 10th the doctor replied, stating that what had passed between him and Mr. Rogers was "an accidental conversation, not an agreement." He then bitterly reproached the Conference with having, as he says, "driven the executors from office," with whom he had no doubt of having made a satisfactory arrangement. He then declined the offer of the two hundred guineas, but consented to appoint three friends to meet three of the Committee. These parties met; but one of Dr. Whitehead's friends having, *in limine*, insisted that he should have the copyright of the work as the basis of any arrangement, the preachers immediately declined to agree to this demand, so that the meeting at once broke up.

It is not improbable that Dr. Whitehead was correct in

* H. Moore's "Life of Wesley," preface, p. vii.

his supposition, that the executors would have been more manageable in treaty for publishing the Life of Wesley than he had found the preachers to be. The former had no interest whatever in promoting the profits of the Book-room; while the latter, knowing that the letters and private papers which would impart essential value to the work, had been bequeathed to two members of their body, in conjunction with the doctor, naturally felt objection to his making an exclusive personal profit from this source. This objection, therefore, instead of impugning the honour of the Conference, should be taken as a proof of its wisdom.

When the negotiation with Dr. Whitehead was broken off, the Committee of preachers, with two of the executors, considered the whole subject; and in the course of the conversation, one of the latter observed, that they had formerly made Dr. Whitehead an offer of half the profits of the work for two years, and that they believed he would now accept these terms. The preachers' Committee, determined to lose no opportunity of "preserving peace," renewed this offer, provided the work should be read by them in manuscript, and approved. Dr. Whitehead replied, that he would not submit his writings to any person whatever on such conditions. The Committee then adopted the only course open to them. As Dr. Whitehead finally determined to publish his Life of Wesley, without any connexion with, or relation to, the Book-room, the Committee requested the other two legatees of Wesley's manuscripts to undertake jointly the preparation of a Memoir, to be published at the Book-room, for the benefit of the Connexion. To this they generously consented; and consequently, in the spring of 1792, Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore's Life of Wesley was announced, and the first edition, of ten thousand copies, sold in a short

period. A second edition was prepared and on sale before the ensuing Conference. Before this subject is dismissed, it ought to be stated, that Dr. Whitehead positively refused not only to give up the private papers which had been intrusted to his care, but to allow his co-trustees to see or examine them, although this was distinctly required by the Will. Such conduct was most reprehensible; for, taking his own statement, that the arrangement with Mr. Rogers was not an agreement, but an "accidental conversation," it sufficiently indicates the understanding on which the papers were committed to his care; and this understanding, as a man of honesty and honour, he was bound to respect. He, however, retained all the papers for several years.

Coke and Moore's Life of Wesley published.

On the appearance of Coke and Moore's "Life of Wesley," a notice of it appeared in the "Analytical Review," in which, after comparing it with the memoir written by Mr. Hampson, which was published about Midsummer in the preceding year, the critic condemned the writers of the former work as having been guilty of "plagiarism." To this charge the late Dr. Adam Clarke replied in the same periodical, January, 1793, contending that each party had alike borrowed from the printed Works of Wesley, and had an equal right to those sources of information and reference. This reply set the question for ever at rest.*

Having detailed the proceedings of this Conference, and the circumstances which arose out of its decisions; and having also in the preceding chapters considered at large the disputes respecting the sacraments and discipline; we turn to a brief review of the progress of Wesleyan evangelical action during the year, as far as our limits, and the materials which have been preserved to our time, will allow.

* Mrs. Smith's "Life of Moore," p. 112.

Narrative of Methodist history resumed.

Most of those persons who had seen with wonder the rise and progress of Methodism, through the unexampled labours of Wesley and his early coadjutors, fully believed, and boldly predicted, that with the death of its founder Methodism would crumble into ruins, and disappear. Many good men shared to a great extent in these apprehensions. The prospect of divisions of opinion, of jarring interests, of conflicting plans and purposes, was so clear, that the worst apprehensions seem to have been justified. Nor were such prognostications as to these elements of discord and disunion mistaken. Every expectation of the kind was amply verified, yet Methodism was not destroyed; the Societies were neither broken up, nor divided into separate sects: on the contrary, notwithstanding all the untoward and harassing circumstances which occurred, the body held on its way, and continued to prosper and increase.

Cause of Methodist progress under such unfavourable circumstances.

As the men of that day marvelled at this strange result, so we may fairly inquire into the real cause which produced it. This will be found in the fact, that Methodism was then not exclusively, nor indeed principally, that which observers saw, and heard, and speculated on. It did not mainly consist in the opinions or proceedings of a few eminent and influential ministers, in the unanimity of action among the wealthy and energetic laymen, or even in harmony of judgment among the members generally respecting religious rites or matters of discipline. No, while all this was wanting, and to the eye of an external observer Methodism, as an ecclesiastical system, appeared an unfinished, inharmonious mass, without sympathy or cohesion,—something between a fragment and a ruin,—it contained, nevertheless, an inner structure, not obvious to those without, but which really constituted the massive framework of the building; and this was united,

harmonious, and steady in its development and increase.

Beneath all the jars and collisions of sentiment and action by which the Methodism of that day was distracted and distressed, the great work of God in the conversion of sinners, and edification of believers, was carried on with diligence and godly zeal. The men who entertained and acted on conflicting views respecting the administration of sacraments or disciplinary authority, retired, from the arena where they had urged their individual opinions, to their closets for a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit, and then went to the pulpit, the Class, or the Prayer-meeting, intent on saving their own souls, and those that heard them. This was the grand conservative principle of Methodism. Here was the secret of its vitality, power, and growth, under circumstances which would have destroyed any merely ecclesiastical or political organization.

But few of the proofs and illustrations of this inward life in the Methodism of this period have been preserved to our day: these are, however, much more than we shall be able to insert.

Mr. Benson's character and usefulness.

No man took a deeper interest or held stronger opinions on the questions which then agitated Methodism, than Joseph Benson. At the time of Wesley's death, he was superintendent of the Birmingham Circuit. Here he had not only to attend to his personal duties as a preacher, and to watch over the interests of an important and densely populated country as a scriptural "overseer:" he had in addition, as a citizen, to sustain his position of anxiety and alarm in those popular outrages, provoked, indeed, most unwarrantably by English gentlemen dining in commemoration of the French Revolution, but still more unwarrantably issuing in the temporary suspension of all

legitimate authority, and in the destruction of much private property; and, to crown the whole, this minister had to assert the truth of Christ's Gospel against the insidious and fatal errors so industriously circulated by the learning, talents, and energy of Dr. Priestley. This latter duty he discharged with great ability. All the erudite sophistries of that able writer were fully met; he was followed into the deepest recesses of philosophy, or the most profound subtleties of metaphysics, and everywhere the truth of God was shown to be paramount over the vain imaginations of man.

But it was as a minister of Christ that Mr. Benson was emphatically at home. On the first day of 1792, he wrote thus: "My soul was much drawn out in prayer in the morning at Cherry Street, as also at Coleshill Street in the afternoon, and the people were much affected and comforted. In the evening, the Society met for renewing their covenant with God. Two persons appear to have received much divine consolation." And again, afterwards, having preached four times in the day, he observes, "O that I may be able to do my duty to this people, and to watch over their souls, as one that must give account!" He then adds, "St. Chrysostom, it seems, never read Heb. xiii. 20, 21, without trembling, conscious of the great charge intrusted with him; and yet he was a most zealous preacher and faithful pastor. O how much more reason have I to tremble! Lord, impress more deeply upon my mind the importance of the care of souls!" Mr. Benson was appointed by the Conference of 1791 to Manchester, and Mr. Bradburn was removed from Manchester to Birmingham. But, in consequence of a mutual arrangement between these preachers, the change did not take place until the 17th of May, 1792.*

* MACDONALD'S "Life of Benson," pp. 232–234.

Mr. Bramwell at Dewsbury.

The fatal defection at Dewsbury has been already mentioned.* This ruin had been so far repaired, that at the Conference of 1791 this place was again made the head of a Circuit, and placed under the superintendency of William Bramwell, who was assisted by a single preacher. Although a considerable improvement had taken place in the neighbourhood, the state of the people was very cheerless to the ardent spirit of this holy man. In a letter to a friend, he says, "I could not find a person who experienced entire sanctification, and but very few who were clear in pardon. The Societies in some places are increased, but active religion scarcely appeared." He mourned over the scene. Some remains of the late bitter wrangling still continued, but with these he would have nothing to do. The cure, he maintained, was not in external appliances, but in a revival of the work of God. Of this there then appeared no sign, no hope. Bramwell knew where his strength lay, and, whilst he laboured most intensely throughout the year, he ceased not to cry mightily to God for His promised effusion of the Holy Spirit. "For some time no reply was vouchsafed; no symptoms of the expected 'rain' appeared. From day to day he went up, like the messenger of Elijah, to the top of his spiritual Carmel, and looked toward the sea for the cloud which was to bring the blessing; but 'there was nothing.' Months rolled away,—there was no token of a change. A year passed,—a year he described as one of 'hard labour and much grief,'—and still there was no sound of coming rain. The horizon was yet as cloudless and unpromising as before." †

But, though no change was seen which was sufficient to cheer the spirit of Bramwell, others even then could

* See Vol. i. of this History, p. 594.

† "Life of Bramwell. By Members of his Family," p. 39.

perceive indications of positive improvement. During the spring of 1792, Mr. Entwisle, who was then at Halifax, exchanged with Mr. Bramwell for a Sabbath, and preached at Dewsbury; after which he made this entry in his journal: "I rejoice to find a considerable increase of the power of godliness in this neighbourhood, through the labours of Mr. Bramwell."*

Yet while good men were thus labouring in different parts of the country, breaking up the fallow ground, and casting in the precious seed of Gospel truth, others persisted in attaching so much importance to circumstantials, that they marred their work, and to a great extent rendered their labours fruitless. The great and good John Pawson did so this year at Halifax. Not content with pursuing his ordinary course of duty as a Methodist preacher, he persisted in introducing preaching in church hours, and not merely administered the Lord's Supper in the chapel, but preached in gown and bands. This conduct greatly grieved many at the time, and left a rankling influence in the minds of some, which produced mischievous results several years afterward.

Intolerance defeated at Southampton.

One of the numerous cases furnished by history of mean persecuting acts recoiling upon their perpetrators, was seen this year in connexion with the Society at Southampton. The Methodists of that town rented what had been a large auction-room, as their place of worship. It happened that a Roman Catholic lady offered to rent the dwelling-house adjoining; but on learning to what purpose this room was applied, she refused to take the house, unless she could have the room also; on which condition she was willing to take the whole on lease for twenty years. The landlord thought this offer too good to be

* "Life of Entwisle," p. 77.

refused; so he gave the Methodists notice to quit, and let the premises to the lady. For some time this caused the Society great embarrassment; but, their trouble coming to the knowledge of a bricklayer who lived on the opposite side of the street, he offered to fit up a large loft, in which he had been accustomed to store his scaffolding, for their use, on the same terms as they had held their former room. They gladly accepted this offer; the loft was more commodious than the auction-room, and made a better place of worship: while the lady who had expelled them, as she supposed, from the neighbourhood, found that she still had them notwithstanding, and in more disagreeable proximity than ever. They were now immediately before her eyes; and, worse still, the windows of the new place of worship completely overlooked her drawing-room. But she had signed the lease, and could not escape from the consequences of her conduct. She, indeed, endeavoured to prejudice the bricklayer against his new tenants; but the only answer she obtained was, "My word is my bond: they shall have it."

The following list gives the quarterly contribution of the Societies in the Portsmouth Circuit, for the maintenance of the preachers, and the general expenses of the Circuit during this year:—Portsmouth, £7. 10*s.*; Crowdhill, 10*s.* 6*d.*; Timsbury, 15*s.* 6*d.*; Winchester, £1. 10*s.*; Southampton, £1. 1*s.*; Whitchurch, £1. 1*s.*; Newport, £3.; country places, £1.:—making a total of £16. 3*s.* per quarter; and this sum remained without alteration throughout the year, from the Conference of 1791 to that of 1792. The number returned to the last mentioned Conference was 480, which was an increase in the year of fifty members in that Circuit.

Before closing our record of this Methodistic year, we

will add a short account of the fruit of its ministrations in a country part of Ireland. A young man, named Matthew Lanktree, while on a visit to some Christian friends, was brought to a saving acquaintance with the Gospel salvation. In the morning, while a Methodist preacher dwelt on "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," he felt the subject brought home to his heart, which was softened into tenderness by manifestations of the Saviour's dying love. Afterward, whilst receiving the Lord's Supper in the church, he more fully realized "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." But we will use his own words: "At the evening prayer-meeting my soul overflowed with love to my adorable Redeemer, in whom I could now 'rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' Having thus obtained mercy, it became my earnest prayer, that my 'kinsfolk and neighbours' might be made acquainted with the same salvation. I wrote to them immediately, and hastened home to explain 'the great things the Lord had done for me.' The desire of my heart was granted in the following manner:—Mr. William Wilson, one of the travelling preachers, felt his mind strangely drawn towards my native place, and accordingly came there, and was entertained by my friends at the same time that my letter reached them: his preaching made a deep impression on their minds. When I returned, they were full of concern, and appeared as a people prepared for the Lord. The following day Mr. Wilson returned. His appearance and manner evinced the man of God. His apparel was very plain; he was sweetly serious, apt to teach, and devoted to prayer. He preached on Saturday evening and Sabbath morning, after which he proposed forming a Society. About twenty persons gave in their names on the occasion, the majority of them my near and dear relations. The most serious part of this

Methodist progress in Ireland.

interesting transaction was, the injunction which Mr. Wilson laid on me, that I should take the charge of watching over them in the Lord. I knew not what to do. I dared not refuse, lest I should grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whose agency was so apparent in this strange work; but when the preacher departed, and left me to reflect on all that had occurred to myself and my people within the space of three weeks, I was filled with astonishment, and humbled in the dust; but the love of Christ constrained me, and the readiness of mind discovered by my friends to embrace the Gospel greatly contributed to my encouragement." *

Nor were these blossoms of spiritual hope blasted. The good work thus begun continued to grow; and the young man who, in the absence of other more mature agency, was so hastily put in charge of a Class, lived to train it up in the ways of God for about two years, and was for nearly fifty-five years afterward an able minister of the Gospel.

Dr. Coke's Mission labours.

Dr. Coke was in America when he heard of the death of Wesley. This was his fourth visit to that country, and his third to the West Indies, in the space of seven years. The singular manner of his first visit to these islands, in 1785, has been already related.† On that occasion he spent about six weeks in visiting Antigua, Dominica, St. Vincent's, St. Christopher's, and St. Eustatius, and then sailed to Charlestown, where he arrived on the 10th of February, 1787. He then travelled through the country, preaching as frequently as possible; and having, in conjunction with Mr. Asbury, held three Conferences, he embarked at Philadelphia, for his homeward voyage, on the 27th of May, and reached Dublin on June the 25th. Toward the end of the following year, Dr. Coke again crossed the

* LANKTREE'S "Biographical Narrative," p. 12.

† See Vol. i. of this History, p. 576.

Atlantic, and landed first at Barbadoes. He then visited St. Vincent's, Dominica, Antigua, St. Kitt's, St. Eustatius, Jamaica, and again passed over to Charlestown on the continent. Here he pursued his usual course of preaching, travelling, and holding Conferences in conjunction with Mr. Asbury, witnessing everywhere the prosperity of the work of God, until the 7th of June, when he sailed from New York, and reached England about the middle of July. On the 28th of November, 1790, this indefatigable minister again left this country, made another tour of the West India Islands, and was pursuing his journey through the States, when at Port Royal in Virginia he heard of the death of Wesley, which induced him to hasten home.

Having taken an active part in the general affairs of the Connexion, and served as secretary to the Conferences of 1791 and 1792, his mind again turned to the object dearest to his heart,—the establishment of new Missions. A promising field nearer home was now presented to his view.

Dr. Coke attempts a Mission to France.

The Revolution in France having abolished the persecuting laws formerly in force, and given perfect freedom of worship to all denominations, Dr. Coke, ever intent on missionary enterprise, felt anxious to introduce Methodist preaching into that country. He was further encouraged to attempt this by a fact which had recently come to his knowledge. A letter had fallen into his hands, which had been written from Paris to Lady Huntingdon, before her death, in which she was earnestly requested to send a preacher there, as there was a prospect of his doing great good. The doctor accordingly went to Paris, taking with him Mr. De Queteville from Jersey. At first the prospect seemed so cheering, that Dr. Coke actually proceeded to purchase a church capable of containing two thousand persons, which was offered for the small sum of £120.

While the arrangements for this purchase were being made, he hired a commodious room in a very public thoroughfare, and advertised that there would be preaching at a time named. The doctor scarcely thought this step necessary, as the neighbourhood was so very populous. The service was, notwithstanding, publicly announced, and at the appointed time Mr. De Queteville (whose native language was French, as spoken in the Channel Islands) preached. They were, however, greatly mortified to find that but thirty-six persons could be induced to enter the house. At the close of this service, it was published that on the ensuing day "Dr. Coke, an English divine, would read to them a sermon of his own composition, in the French tongue." On this occasion the congregation consisted of six persons. Further inquiry convinced them of the hopeless character of the attempt; upon which Dr. Coke obtained permission to withdraw from the treaty for the purchase of the church, and returned to England.

The Conference of 1792.

The Conference of 1792 was held in London, and began July the 31st. Alexander Mather was elected president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The number of Circuits in Great Britain and Ireland was at this time increased from 115 to 121. Numerous changes led to this result. The following places ceased to be Circuits:—Wells, Tiverton, Bideford, Coventry, Warrington, Yarm, Lisleen, and Omagh. And these names were added to the list of Circuits: viz., Yarmouth, Walsingham, Collumpton, Shrewsbury, Northwich, Lancaster, Castle Donington, Ashby, Stockton, Ayr, Berwick, Aughrim, Ramelton, and Newtown Stewart. The numbers in Society were, in Great Britain, Ireland, and the Islands, 74,124; in British America and the West Indies, 7,624: showing an increase in the former

of 1,656, and in the latter of 1,099 members. The numbers reported from the United States were 71,502, giving an increase on the year of 7,356. The list of reserve was at this time reduced to one solitary preacher.

It was at this Conference that the question of administering the sacrament was decided for one year by lot; a manner of proceeding to which many of the preachers were greatly opposed, although the difficulties connected with the question, and the violent contention which they occasioned, induced them to submit for the sake of peace. The following regulations were also enacted:—That no preacher shall receive any allowance from the Circuit on account of his children, after they have arrived at the age of seventeen:—That "no ordination shall take place in the Methodist Connexion without the consent of the Conference first obtained;" and "if any brother break the above-mentioned rule by ordaining, or being ordained, he thereby excludes himself."

The freedom of expression in speech and writing, induced by the successful promulgation of republican principles in France, led the Conference to place the following rules on their Minutes:—

"None of us shall, either in writing or conversation, speak lightly or irreverently of the government under which he lives. We are to observe, that the oracles of God command us to be subject to the higher powers, and that honour to the king is there connected with the fear of God."

It was also resolved that service in church hours should not be introduced in any new place without the consent of the Conference. A minute was also made, prohibiting the use of harsh and offensive expressions in controversial disputations. Other miscellaneous resolutions were passed;

and finally the following important question was considered:—"What shall we do more to promote the work of God? *A.* We do at this solemn hour of the night (nearly midnight) devote ourselves to the service of Almighty God, in a more unreserved and entire manner than ever we have hitherto done, and are all determined to spend and be spent in the blessed work. And this our solemn dedication of ourselves to God we do unanimously signify by rising from our seats in the presence of the Lord." * The venerable John Valton thus wrote of this season:—"The last night, between nine and ten o'clock, we were in great confusion and uncertainty how to act towards the disaffected trustees. We went to prayer, calling upon God to appear in our behalf. The Lord answered us in rich mercy. The affair was settled, and love possessed every breast. A day of thanksgiving was appointed, and we all stood up to testify our determination to give ourselves more fully than ever to God. Having done this, we sang, 'Praise God,' &c., and went to prayer, and parted in the utmost love and harmony." †

New proposals from Dr. Whitehead respecting the Life of Wesley.

At this Conference, Dr. Whitehead presented new terms with respect to the publication of his Life of John Wesley. These terms are propounded in eight articles, and are printed with other matter as an advertisement to his first volume. It is not necessary to set these forth at length; for although they greatly modified his original propositions, they contained elements which rendered them entirely inadmissible. It was first stipulated that Dr. Whitehead should retain what part of Wesley's private papers he pleased, for the purposes of his work. For, although he now consented for Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore to join him in

* Minutes, vol. i., p. 262.

† "Wesleyan Magazine," 1845, p. 217, *note*.

an examination of these papers, only those which the trustees should *unanimously* think unfit for publication were to be destroyed, and of the residue Dr. Whitehead was to retain for the purpose of his work all that he pleased. So he was to have an absolute *veto* on what papers were to be published.

Then, although he now consented to read to a committee of preachers the portion of the work (128 pages) already printed, and the manuscript, as it should be prepared, to persons appointed by the Conference, it was only that they might have the means of advising him: he still insisted on retaining entire authority to insert in it what he deemed proper. On these conditions, and provided that the book should never be published without his name, nor altered without his consent, he offered the Conference the copyright on their paying all the expenses of its preparation: the doctor would then trust to the generosity of the Conference, as to what remuneration he should receive for his time and labour in the preparation of the work.

These inadmissible.

We have said these terms were inadmissible. They were clearly so; for the Conference could not recognise the right of Dr. Whitehead absolutely to dispose of Wesley's papers, when that right belonged as much to either of his co-trustees as to himself. Still less could they, as a religious body, consent to acquire the copyright, and to perpetuate unaltered a work, over the compilation of which they had not been allowed to exercise effective control, and which, for anything they knew to the contrary, might contain matter which in their judgment would be open to the most serious objection. If the Conference had any apprehension of this result, when they declined to receive Dr. Whitehead's proposals, they would have found them amply

justified when the book made its appearance. For Dr. Whitehead, although known to be a Dissenter in principle, assumed the language and sentiments of a High Churchman, and laboured by this means to exalt the character of Charles Wesley, at the expense of his brother and of the itinerant preachers. He was also particularly sarcastic and bitter when speaking of Wesley's giving a regular ministry, by ordination with the imposition of hands, to the Societies in America, after the political independence of the States had been acknowledged by the mother country; although ordination from Wesley had but a short time previously been the object of his own most earnest desire. He had, indeed, actually applied to Wesley, through Henry Moore, to be received as a preacher, to be ordained, and to be appointed a superintendent; and engaged, if he could be thus favoured, to resign the dispensary and his medical practice, and to come into the work as at the beginning. Mr. Moore presented the doctor's request to Wesley, and urged it by his own. But, on receiving a reply to his letter, he found every other part of it minutely answered, while this request was unnoticed. Mr. Moore wrote again, and strongly repeated the same request, and with precisely the same result. Mr. Moore adds, "The doctor's disappointment was extreme. Mr. Wesley loved the man; but he knew his versatility, and would not trust him again with so important an office." *

Besides other considerations, the circumstances of the Conference with respect to a Life of Wesley had greatly changed. Coke and Moore's Life had reached a second edition, so that the wants of the Connexion had been met, —at least, as far as practicable, in the absence of Wesley's papers; and it might fairly be supposed that the pub-

* H. Moore's "Life of Wesley," Preface, p. ix.

lication of Dr. Whitehead's Memoir by himself alone would involve the Connexion in less hazard than if purchased and published by the Book-room.

Dr. Coke again visits America and the West Indies.

Foiled in his efforts to be useful in France, Dr. Coke felt called upon again to visit the islands of the sea, and the Methodist brethren in America. He accordingly sailed from Gravesend on September 1st, in a vessel bound for America; reached Newcastle, in Delaware, on the 30th of October, and arrived in Baltimore in time to take part in the General Conference, which began in that city on the 1st of September. This assembly continued fifteen days, and he observes respecting it, "I had always entertained very high ideas of the piety and zeal of the American preachers, and of the considerable abilities of many: but I had no expectation, I confess, that the debates would be carried on in so very masterly a manner." It was on this occasion determined that the next General Conference should be held in 1796, and that in the mean time the Districts respectively should hold Annual Conferences. The doctor then visited Cokesbury College, and expressed himself as highly satisfied with its state and character. Having thus accomplished his object in America, he sailed from New York, and reached St. Eustatius on the 31st of December. This island belonged to the Dutch West India Company, and was governed by a Mr. Reynolds, who appears to have been a brutal tyrant. Dr. Coke says, "He received us with his usual acrimony, and seemed and spoke as if he was determined to pull down the work of God." All preaching was forbidden; there was no minister on the island; even meetings for prayer and Christian fellowship were prohibited; and men, and even women, who broke through these persecuting rules, and met in small companies to pray to God, were cruelly

Violent persecution.

stripped and flogged with the cart-whip by the common executioner. The result of these measures was, that the lovely Society of above five hundred members which formerly existed here was dispersed, and only about half a dozen small Classes, meeting in corners, were known to exist.

Leaving this scene with loathing, Dr. Coke sailed to St. Kitt's; where on his landing he was informed by the missionary, Mr. Warrener, that a fearful persecution had broken out at St. Vincent's, and that Mr. Lumb, the missionary to that island, was then in the common prison. The Doctor, in consequence, immediately proceeded thither. On his way, the passage-boat touched at Dominica, where Dr. Coke learned that Mr. M'Cormack, who had been sent to that island as a missionary in 1791, died after a few months' labour, but had, even in that short period, been eminently successful. About one hundred and fifty souls had been awakened under his ministry, but these had been partially scattered, as no minister had since visited them. Dr. Coke got as many of them together as could be suddenly collected, and, not having time to preach, prayed with them, and encouraged them to persevere. On the 6th of January he reached St. Vincent's, and hastened to the gaol to visit his imprisoned brother. From him he learned that the authorities of the island had prohibited preaching to the Negro slaves without a licence, except by the rectors of parishes. The punishment for the first offence was a small fine, or imprisonment for not less than thirty, nor more than ninety, days; for the second offence, such corporeal punishment as the court should adjudge, with banishment from the island: a return to the island, after having been thus banished, exposed the offender to death. In connexion with this law it was enacted, that no licence to preach should be given

to any one who had not resided one year on the island;—a proof that it was directed against the itinerant plan of Methodism. Mr. Lumb bravely dared to disobey this unchristian statute. Knowing it had passed, he went to the Methodist chapel, and, allowing free ingress, as usual, to all the Negroes, he preached to them the Gospel of Christ, and was consequently shut up in prison. Dr. Coke could only offer his friend the consolations of religion, and hope that his Majesty in council would disallow this persecuting measure,—a hope which was afterward fully realized.

From St. Vincent's the Doctor went to Grenada, to introduce Mr. Bishop, a newly appointed missionary from the Norman isles, to his sphere of labour, where they were very favourably received. Here Dr. Coke records a fine instance of self-sacrifice made by a Methodist missionary. Mr. Thomas Owens, who had been on the island as a missionary the preceding year, had so commended himself to the favour of the governor, that the latter offered him the living of an adjacent island, worth £400 *per annum*, with surplice fees of nearly an equal amount, if he would go to England, under his recommendation, for ordination by the Bishop of London. Mr. Owens, however, refused the flattering offer, and lived and died a Methodist preacher.

After staying in Grenada a week, Dr. Coke proceeded to St. Kitt's, where he was kindly received, and spent a happy Sabbath, and where, he observes, "religion flourishes like an olive tree in the house of God." From St. Kitt's the Doctor sailed to Tortola, where Mr. Owens was then stationed, who, by his judicious management, had averted a warm persecution, and was preaching with great success, having fourteen hundred awakened Negroes under his care. Dr. Coke thence sailed to Antigua, where the District

Meeting was held, which continued five days, and was very satisfactory. He then made a brief visit to Barbadoes, passed on to Jamaica, and thence returned to England. The number of members and missionaries, as given at the above District Meeting, will be found in the list at the ensuing Conference.

Revival at Dewsbury.

Returning to a consideration of the home work of Methodism, it will be remembered that we left William Bramwell, on the eve of the last Conference, labouring to promote a revival of the work of God at Dewsbury, with some indications of good attending his ministrations, but nothing that he would call prosperity. After the Conference, on entering upon his course of duty for another year, these labours were renewed and extended. He exerted himself to excite in the people the same ardent desire for the prosperity of Zion in which he was absorbed, and for this purpose appointed prayer-meetings at five o'clock in the morning; and, in accordance with his earnest exhortation, many joined at this early hour to pray for the desired Pentecost. At this time he had an influential coadjutor in a pious and zealous female, Ann Cutler, whose devotedness had earned for her the appellation of "*praying Nanny.*" So early as four o'clock in the morning, this ardent female would be on her knees, earnestly beseeching God to pour His Spirit upon His church. In another chamber not far off, the deeper tones of the minister might be heard, urging the same request. Such persevering prayer was not likely to remain unanswered. At length, while Ann Cutler was engaged in prayer, one person received the blessing of perfect love; afterward at a prayer-meeting, two others found peace with God: then came a glorious revival; a hundred persons were added to the Dewsbury Society in one quarter, and many of the former

members were greatly quickened and blessed in their religious course. Other parts of the Circuit also shared these showers of blessings, and people flocked from every part of the surrounding country to partake of these refreshing influences. The love-feasts were crowded with persons anxious to tell what God had done for their souls.

The physical strength and endurance of this man of God at this time were just as remarkable, as the fervour of his piety, and the vigour of his faith. The Rev. John Kershaw, who spent some months under his roof during this year, gives the following account:—"I once accompanied Mr. Bramwell from Dewsbury to Wakefield in the afternoon, for the purpose of assisting the Rev. Richard Reece in holding a Watch-night. Mr. Bramwell preached: we continued the service, as usual on these occasions, until the new year was ushered in. After taking some refreshment, we rode home six miles: it was more than two o'clock when we retired to rest. The next morning (Sabbath) he was in his closet at half-past four o'clock,—near his usual hour,—pouring out strong cries and tears to God. We breakfasted at our accustomed time, seven o'clock. He walked about two miles, or two miles and a half, to preach at nine, and afterwards renewed the tickets of a pretty large Class. From that place he walked about three miles further, dined, preached, met two or three Classes, and preached again. Afterwards he travelled upwards of two miles more on foot, and preached a fourth sermon. This done, he returned home, walking five miles back. He then sat down to supper, ate his meat with gladness and singleness of heart, and with cheerfulness also. Having finished his repast, he rose from his seat, exclaiming, 'Brother Kershaw, I could do it all over again. I am almost as fresh as I was in the morning.' The

next day he was in his closet at his usual hour, four o'clock." *

Unfavourable state of the country.

The state of the country, indeed, was such as to lead zealous ministers to put forth uncommon exertions. We can scarcely conceive of any evil influence which did not at this time more or less affect the English people. The progress of republicanism in France gave an immense impulse to low, loose, levelling political sentiments, which fearfully corrupted the middle and lower classes. The same cause produced a correspondent revulsion in the extreme adherents of what was called "the Church and State" party. With many of these, the support of the government, irrespective of its abuses or defects, was patriotism; while attachment to the Church, without regard to its spirit and object, was deemed religion. Besides these things, the infidel writings of Paine and his coadjutors deluged the land with blasphemy and ribaldry. His trial and conviction for libellous language published in his "Rights of Man," which took place this year, gave increased currency and potency to his irreligious opinions. In addition to all this, the country was afflicted with a mania of speculation. The exciting cause on this occasion was canal shares. On one day nineteen notices appeared in the "Gazette" of intended applications to Parliament respecting internal navigation; while the premium given for shares in companies which had obtained parliamentary sanction, reached a fabulous amount. Those of the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal reached a premium of £1,170; the Stourbridge, £350; and others a corresponding amount. Again, the country, but especially the metropolis, swarmed with French refugees, most of whom were in a state of abject distress. All these, and many minor causes, operated unfavourably on the religion of the country; and

* "Memoir of William Bramwell," p. 41.

those who were really in earnest to promote the spread of the Gospel, had to labour "in season and out of season." These efforts were not unfrequently accompanied by special manifestations of the divine blessing; and even when much apparent fruit was not realized, the holy unction was felt; God was present in His sanctuary. Mr. Benson has numerous entries in his journal similar to the following:—"On the morning of May 22nd, I preached at Oldham: the Lord was present with us, and many were refreshed." Having afterward preached at Rochdale and Todmorden, he again adds, "The Lord refreshed me with His presence." "This day I have gone quite beyond my strength, having preached not only four times, but very long every time. However, I hope good has been done. The congregations have been large, attentive, and affected."

Mr. Benson's defence of the Methodist preachers.

This eminent minister had not only to exert himself to the full measure of his strength, and sometimes to go beyond it, in the regular work of his Circuit, but also to repel the attacks which were made by men of elevated station in the Church on the Methodist ministry. The Rev. Edward Tatham, D.D., rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, preached a sermon in four of the churches of that city, which was afterward published. This sermon was directed against the Dissenters and Methodists,—mainly, it is presumed, against the latter. The principal objects contemplated in this production appear to have been, to show that sound learning and honesty of purpose, or, as he expressed it, "ability of head, and integrity of heart," were the prime qualifications for the Christian ministry; and that the right of private judgment, the privilege and boast of Protestants, mainly consists in the choice of such men for ministers. Mr. Benson replied to this discourse, in five

letters to the author, which were published in the spring of 1793, and reached a third edition before the end of the year. In this able production the author, in opposition to the Doctor's leading principle, contended that the truth and importance of the doctrines taught are of more consequence to the hearer than the degree of ability, or even of integrity, possessed by the teacher. "What avails it to me, Reverend Sir," he asks, "what a man's abilities may be as a teacher, or what his integrity, if, on the one hand, he be deceived himself, and of course deceive me by teaching what is false; or, on the other, merely amuse me by teaching what is unimportant?"

It naturally fell within Dr. Tatham's plan, to place the Methodist preachers, as self-taught men, in disadvantageous comparison, in respect of learning, with clergymen of the Establishment. To this part of the discourse Mr. Benson replied thus:—"Above twenty years ago I entered at Oxford, in hopes of perfecting my education in the languages and sciences. And as this was soon after the Doctors and Masters, in full Convocation, a general search having been made, had expelled from the University all that were judged deficient in capacity and learning; had I not reason to believe I was become a member of a very learned body? But how great were my astonishment and mortification, when, waiting upon my tutor, Mr. B——, to know in what books he would give me lectures, I was given to understand that the gentlemen under his care read (some of them were in orders) *Cornelius Nepos*, and the *Greek Testament*, and that I must go through these books with them! After attending a few times at the hours appointed, unable any longer to brook so much loss of time, I made bold to intimate that these books, and most of the Latin and Greek classics, were very familiar to me, as I

had taught them at a grammar school near Bristol. He then informed me, that he would excuse my attending; but, as none of the other gentlemen under his care were capable of reading any other books, he could not conveniently give me lectures in any other books. I was, therefore, obliged, though at the University, to be, what you call, 'self-taught;' for I did not receive the smallest assistance from any, save that I attended public lectures in divinity, read by the Regius Professor at Christchurch, and went through a course of lectures on experimental philosophy."

It is not intended by this quotation to underrate the advantages of a collegiate education, or to insinuate that Oxford now is what it was then. But, as there are persons still fond of depreciating the preachers of that day as ignorant and unlearned, it is only simple justice to show, as the above extract clearly does, what was the amount of classical learning generally acquired in the first of the English Universities at that time, and to assert the well known fact, that some at least of the Methodist preachers, contemporary with Benson, who had none of his advantages in early life, by persevering industry and application acquired a respectable knowledge of the Scriptures in their original languages.

The following extract from a letter written by Mr. Brackenbury to Jasper Winscom, dated, "Isle of Portland, April 16th, 1793," shows how Methodism progressed at this time in the remote parts of the south of England:—"Mr. Smith, my colleague, is now at Poole, and through the blessing of God we have gathered upwards of twenty souls there, who meet in Society. There is also a pleasing prospect of many more. We have likewise made a beginning at Ringwood. I preached there about two months ago, and Mr. Smith has been over

since, but was very ill used by a Squire Mowbray, a justice of the peace, before whom five persons were summoned to appear for disturbing the meeting. The justice defended the delinquents, and threw the expense on Mr. Smith, though the evidence was incontestably on his side. But what will not wicked magistrates do, when under the malignant influence of prejudice and passion? I think I never heard of an act of more palpable injustice in all my life.....Through the divine goodness, the work advances in this Isle. We have near fifty members in Society, beside the children, who amount to near thirty more; and several of them have found peace with God."

The Conference of 1793.

The Conference of 1793 was held at Leeds, and commenced on Monday, July 29th. John Pawson was elected president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The Circuits were now 131 in number, being an increase of 10; the following changes having taken place:—Godalming, Higham Ferrers, St. Ives, (Huntingdon,) Banbury, Bradford, (Wilts,) Leek, Wigan, Hinckley, Newark, Rotherham, Greenock, Mallow, and Ballymena, became heads of Circuits; while France, Lancaster, and Ramilton, ceased to have any place in the list. It may be worth notice, that the number given in the Minutes is 132; but this is an error occasioned by dropping the number attached to France with the name, so that the list passes on from "25. Alderney," to "27. Bath."

The most important of the subjects deliberated on at this Conference have been fully considered in foregoing chapters. Besides these, various salutary arrangements were made, such as restricting the division of Circuits, except with the consent of the District Meeting and other authorities; referring all business relating to chapels, preachers' houses, &c., to the District Meetings, in the

first instance, before they could be entertained by the Conference.

One resolution of this Conference deserves to be noticed, as a striking departure from the views and practices of Wesley: "The distinction between ordained and unordained preachers shall be dropped." The Conference had good reason for this step. They saw that, being obliged to make a concession of the sacraments to Societies which unanimously desired to receive them from their own preachers, no alternative was left them but formally ordaining all the preachers in full Connexion; or regarding the reception of a preacher, thus fully separated to the work of the ministry, as equivalent to real or formal ordination. The latter, which is decidedly the more reasonable and scriptural view, was adopted. And in the position then occupied by the Conference, it could be taken with propriety and consistency, although such a recognition could scarcely be expected from Wesley himself, considering his strong ecclesiastical opinions, and the position which he throughout regarded his preachers as occupying.

Little as was effected at this time towards settling the controversy respecting the sacraments, enough was done to exercise a mighty influence on the spiritual condition of the Connexion. In very many respects, the persons taking opposite sides in this struggle were equally entitled to the affectionate consideration and forbearance of the Conference. But it cannot be denied, that in one aspect they must be allowed to stand on very different ground. The men who, adhering to Wesley's original views, contended that Methodists should go to their parish churches to receive the sacraments, were clearly contending for an opinion,—a long cherished and conscientiously held opinion,—but still, nothing more than an opinion. This was not the case

with great numbers who desired to receive the sacraments from their own preachers. They felt the requirements of the word of God pressing on their consciences; they could not comfortably communicate with ungodly, worldly, or persecuting men; and they experienced a religious want of the sacred ordinance. This difference in the circumstances of the parties explains the cause why the advocates for the administration of the sacraments increased in number and power, until they obtained all they desired. The power of an opinion, however tenaciously held, could not stand before the energy of a religious necessity.

The relaxation of the rule on this subject, therefore, by this Conference had a very stimulating effect on the whole Connexion. The following is an extract from a letter written about this time by Mr. Entwisle to Mr. Richard Reece:—"I have delayed writing, in order that I might give you some information respecting the state of our affairs since our 'innovations,' as some call them. Mr. Hanby has administered the Lord's Supper at Thorner and at Holbeck, which was attended with a remarkable blessing. The accounts which the communicants give of both these seasons would delight you. The Lord was most powerfully and graciously present, insomuch that some who had been unfriendly to the administration of the sacrament by their own preachers, and went rather as spies, were so overwhelmed with the gracious presence of our blessed Saviour, that they are quite changed; and the accounts which are given of the overshadowings of the Holy Spirit in the ordinance, seem to have a good effect on the people."*

Mr. Adam Clarke, then labouring in the Liverpool Cir-

* "Memoir of Joseph Entwisle," p. 101.

Violent assault on Mr. Adam Clarke.

cuit, narrowly escaped being murdered by two bigoted Papists. He had been preaching at a village called Aintree, and was accompanied by his brother and a friend. Two Roman Catholics, perfect strangers to Mr. Clarke, happened to attend the chapel; and although he made no allusion whatever to any doctrines in dispute between Papists and Protestants, they were struck with the sermon, and, immediately on leaving the place, laid a plan for taking vengeance on the preacher. They, accordingly, waylaid him on his return, and threw a stone at him with such dexterity and force, as to cut through his hat, inflict a deep wound on his head, and fell him to the ground. His friends carried him to a cottage, when his brother, leaving him in charge of the friends, pursued the assailants, and had them arrested in a neighbouring public-house. He then returned, and found his brother so seriously injured, that he wished to leave him in the cottage for the night. But the residents, having learned all the circumstances of the case, and they also being Catholics, began to say that it was a pity the preacher had not been killed,—that he had no business to come there to preach. This language determined his friends to remove Mr. Clarke at all hazards: so, with difficulty and danger, they took him to his brother's house at Maghul, from whence the next day he was, at his earnest request, conveyed to his own residence at Liverpool, his hair and clothes being covered with blood. Mr. Clarke was laid up with this wound more than a month, and for a considerable part of this time in extreme danger. He, however, positively refused to appear against the men to prosecute them; so that, on confessing their fault, and binding themselves before a magistrate not to offend again, they were discharged. But such leniency was lost on them.

They continued to violate the laws of the country, and, at length, came to a tragic end.

Great revivals in Yorkshire.

During this year there was a very extensive revival of the work of God in Yorkshire and some other places. This appears to have arisen partly from what has been already noticed as having taken place at Dewsbury in the preceding year, but principally from the devoted labours of Robert Lomas, then the junior preacher at Halifax. As much misapprehension exists respecting the causes and influences which lead to or accompany these special outpourings of the Holy Spirit, it may be desirable to give Mr. Lomas's own account of the state of his mind immediately previous to the great success which attended his ministry. The blessed influence which had so richly fallen on Dewsbury had more or less extended to the neighbouring places, and some indications of special good had appeared at Greetland in the Halifax Circuit, when, just before the Conference of 1793, Mr. Lomas went to that place to preach and hold a lovefeast. Of this occasion he says, "As I was going to the place, and after I arrived there, I was led to inquire, 'What can I say to do the people good?' I committed myself to God, and I hope He directed me in the choice of subjects. I found liberty in preaching, but nothing out of the common way. In the lovefeast I bore my feeble testimony to the truth, and spoke explicitly of my own experience; saying, 'For some time I have found nothing contrary to the love of God and man, and, as far as I know, the Lord has cleansed me from all sin; but of this I want a clearer witness.' What was said seemed to have a good effect upon the people in general; they were evidently stirred up to lay hold on the Lord. I was desirous to spend a little time in prayer, and requested several of the brethren to use their liberty.

Halifax.

They did so, pleading with God for themselves and others. I found myself uncommonly affected while one of them was praying for me. With my whole heart, with all the powers of my soul and body, I then cried to the Lord for a general blessing. As I prayed and pleaded, my faith was strengthened, and I said, 'O Lord, if it will not displease Thee, we would wrestle with Thee as Jacob did; and with Jacob Thou wast not displeased,' &c. Immediately my whole frame felt the power of God, and the whole house seemed filled with His glory. I continued praying, or rather praising God. My soul was lost and swallowed up in Him. I had before been blessed in a similar way; but never in that degree. The people were amazed; some glorified God: meanwhile the gracious influences waxed stronger and stronger; each individual *seemed* to forget everything, save his eternal interests. The world receded from his view, Satan lost his hold, evil agencies found nothing whereon to fasten; faith being strongly exercised, a wrestling spirit filled every heart, while every power both of body and mind seemed to be engaged. Then the gates of heaven were opened, the glory of the Holy One of Israel filling the very place; and by some now living, and by hundreds transplanted to paradise, Greetland lovefeast will never be forgotten. Many found that peace which passeth understanding; many more proved the full efficacy of the atonement. The chapel was divided into small companies of praying souls, while, amid these, little bands of penitents were groaning for deliverance. The solemn song of thanksgiving was at times mingled with the sinner's cry, 'Ah wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?' Prayer for pardon, and a shout of praise for forgiveness, ascended together. Every tongue was unloosed, every heart touched; and, after continuing

together until a protracted hour, the meeting was with great difficulty concluded." *

This was not a sudden burst of blessing which ended with the day. The people who had been thus strangely quickened and revived, returned to their several habitations full of holy love and heavenly zeal. They did not keep silence, but everywhere rejoiced to tell what God had done for their souls: thus the fire passed from heart to heart, until the whole Circuit was brought under the same influence. Nearly twelve months afterward, in a letter to Dr. Coke, Mr. Atmore, the superintendent of the Circuit, makes the following statement: "We have added about seven hundred persons in our Circuit since last Conference; the far greater part of whom, there is reason to believe, are truly converted to the Lord, and can rejoice in Him as their Saviour and Redeemer. The work has commonly been carried on in prayer-meetings, which were singularly owned of God. Frequently ten, fifteen, or twenty souls were either justified or fully sanctified in one of these meetings. Very often, while one of the brethren was earnestly engaged in prayer, the power of God descended, and some began to be deeply affected, and cried to God for mercy. Many were much agitated in their bodies, and even fainted away. The cries of others were very great indeed, and they remained in distress for several hours, till they were sensibly delivered from their misery, and enabled to rejoice in God. It has been no uncommon thing for six, eight, or ten persons to be in distress together in the same room. In these cases our friends continued in prayer with them, till they were brought into the liberty of the children of God. I have conversed with some hundreds of them, and have been

* WALKER's "Methodism in Halifax," p. 192.

surprised to hear the clear and distinct account which they gave of the work upon their souls. Some have now evinced the reality of the change upon their hearts, for twelve months, by a holy life; so that the mouths of gainsayers are stopped. I hope this work will spread over the whole earth."

Mr. Lomas adds the following particulars: "At these meetings there have been at times some irregularities; some crying out for distress and fear, while others have been shouting for joy and gladness of heart; perhaps numbers in distress at the same time, and one or more endeavouring to help or encourage each of them severally. The noise of these unusual proceedings spread far and wide, so that many of the baser sort from all quarters ran together, to see and hear for themselves; and I suppose it seldom happened that many went away without having their minds deeply affected with spiritual and eternal things. Some of them came with a set purpose to mock, disturb, and oppose, and they have often entered the chapel in this practice; but, before they have proceeded far, the hand of the Lord has been heavy upon them, and they have roared out for the disquietude of their souls. The Lord has often sent these captives deliverance on the same evening, after having wrestled with Him in great agony of mind and body for some hours. The mercy of God in this has been truly wonderful; for numbers who had heard of the conversion of their companions, and came with a full determination not to cry out for mercy as they had done, but to mimic the cries of others, were, in spite of all their efforts, brought down on their knees, and forced to cry out in good earnest."

This extraordinary work extended to several of the surrounding Circuits, namely, Birstal, Huddersfield, Keighley,

Bradford, and Leeds, and even to Hull. To two or three only of these will our limits allow us to refer. William Bramwell was removed by the Conference, in 1793, from Dewsbury to Birstal. He left a revival behind him at the former place, and found one prepared for him at the latter. And the appointment of such a man at this time was most opportune; for while the people were evidently prepared for a gracious visitation, Mr. Bramwell's colleague, and several of the leaders, were disposed to look at anything so extraordinary with suspicion and distrust. Mr. Bramwell, however, succeeded in fostering the good work which he found in progress when he came into the Circuit, until the flood-tide of heavenly mercy was poured on the thirsty land. "Before his coming," said Mr. Thomas Pearson, of Gomersal, "we had a partial outpouring; but a mighty shower now descended, and the truth and power of God wonderfully prevailed." On the Christmas Day a love-feast was held, when not less than fifty penitent sinners found peace with God, and rejoiced in the forgiveness of sins. From this day, all opposition, distrust, and coldness ceased; preachers, leaders, and people united with one accord to promote this great work. The glorious work of salvation proceeded: on the Easter Day following, fifty more were converted to God. The congregations were everywhere crowded, the word of God had free course, and about five hundred souls were added to the Societies in the Circuit, besides what was necessary to supply the vacancies caused by deaths, removals, &c.

Birstal.

The Leeds Circuit richly shared in this spiritual prosperity. The revival of 1793 is said by Moses Roberts to have been more general, as to the extent of its operations, than any that has taken place in the Leeds Circuit, either before or since: that is, it was going on at a greater

Leeds.

number of places, at one and the same time, than any other with which that Circuit has been favoured. The zealous exertions of two pious females were at this time rendered very useful. Mr. John Allen, who was the second preacher at Leeds this year, thus describes this great work:—"My soul has long wished to see a revival of the work of God, and, glory be to the name of the Lord, I have now seen it with my eyes; and in such a way and manner as I never expected. The Lord has poured out His Spirit upon the people in a wonderful manner indeed! He has wrought by almost every sort of means, and sometimes without any means at all. Some have been alarmed by dreams and visions, and others by seeing people going to hear preaching, thinking that it indicated the near approach of the day of judgment. Some have had their hearts deeply affected, without being able to assign any cause. Even some opposers, who came to be diverted by the cries of distressed penitents, have been so powerfully wrought upon, as to be forced to weep louder than those whom they came to ridicule. A few, who, in order to divert themselves, pretended to be affected, were thrown into convulsions; and there is reason to believe, that some of those daring characters were snatched as brands from the burning. Since the last January, nine hundred or a thousand have been added to the Societies; and, through mercy, most of them have stood hitherto. It has been very common for people to come to a meeting unconcerned, and go away praising God for His mercy and love. Many of those brought in are very young. I joined eighty in Society one night at Bramley, and about sixty of them were unmarried persons. At Armley, where I joined thirty-six at once, about thirty were unmarried; and, at another time, out of sixty whom I joined, fifty seemed to be under

twenty years of age. At many places the work has been attended with much noise and apparent confusion. At other places it has been carried on in a more still and regular way; and where this has been the case, the work seems to be more genuine. One thing injurious to the work has been the practice of some, who endeavoured to persuade persons in distress to say that they were brought into liberty. This I have endeavoured to put a stop to, as I believe that those that are brought into liberty will be ready of themselves to make confession unto salvation. And yet, notwithstanding a few things of which I could not approve, there has been as little of an objectionable nature in the course of the work as one could expect, considering the shortness of the time in which it was wrought, and the ignorance of many who became subjects of it." *

Hull.

When the Methodists at Hull heard of this blessed work, and of the great numbers who had by its means been brought to the experience of salvation, they earnestly desired to participate in similar blessings. God was accordingly besought with much ardent prayer, both in public and private, for an outpouring of His Holy Spirit. Mr. Alexander Mather, who has given a full account of the revival at Hull, observes that there "a too anxious attachment to decorum and order, and consequently a strong aversion to lamentations and cries, especially in a public congregation," obtained; so that the work was likely, if it appeared, to be received coldly, if not opposed. "However," he says, "at the Christmas lovefeast this difficulty was surmounted, and in some degree we were willing to let God work upon the minds of the people which way He pleased, although we should incur the disagreeable reproach of being accounted enthusiasts. At this meeting we were

* "Methodist Magazine," 1812, p. 86.

put to the trial, and bore it very well: one person, being in great distress of mind, cried out mightily for mercy, and was soon delivered." From this time an earnest spirit of prayer generally prevailed among the people, and many instances of conversion took place, until on Sunday, the 9th of March, when Mr. Brown preached, many were in great distress of mind. This, being generally known, induced a large and earnest congregation to attend on the Monday. Then, "when Mr. Brown had concluded his discourse, he requested the Bands to meet in the vestry, and likewise invited any who were in distress to meet with them. But, the vestry not being large enough to contain all that tarried, they attempted to collect them into a body in one part of the chapel. This, however, they were not able to accomplish, because there were many in great anguish of mind in different parts of the chapel, and these required help as well as others; which obliged the brethren to pray with them and encourage them to look unto the Lord for His promised salvation. In a short time several, who had been in great agony, found the blessing of forgiving mercy, and, instantly rising up, declared what the Lord had done for their souls; and their friends who were around them united together in praising the Lord on their behalf; while others, in different parts of the chapel, still remained in distress. In this manner they continued until about ten persons found the Lord."

Thus the work of salvation proceeded at Hull, Beverley, and other neighbouring places. On the 25th of March, Mr. Mather took a journey into Staffordshire, and returned on the 6th of April. From careful inquiry, he concluded that during his absence about one hundred and fifty persons had found peace with God; and so it continued, ten or twelve, and sometimes more, finding pardoning mercy each

evening. "On April 13th," Mr. Mather proceeds to say, "we had our lovefeast: many of the new converts stood up before the congregation, and gave a clear and satisfactory account of the work of God upon their hearts. The meeting continued till five o'clock, and it was then with reluctance that they departed. The chapel was crowded with deeply serious hearers at six o'clock, and the prayer-meeting began as soon as the preaching concluded, and continued till ten, when the congregation was dismissed a second time, and they were entreated to return home, especially all those whose family affairs required their attendance. But this requisition had very little effect; for the greater part continued in prayer till one or two o'clock; and even some remained until the morning preaching. Above twenty found peace."

In the progress of this work of grace many very interesting cases of remarkable individual conversions took place. We mention only the following: "A servant of Mr. C——'s, of Cottingham, came to the market, and, being informed of the prayer-meetings, and the benefits that many people found at them, was so affected, that she resolved to stay all night, in order to be present at one of them; saying to herself, 'I can but lose my place; and what is that to the salvation of my soul?' Soon after the meeting began, she was convinced of her fallen state, and made sensible of the burden of sin; and before midnight received a sense of pardoning mercy. Next morning she returned home rejoicing in the Lord, to the astonishment of her mistress, who is a pious person, and expresses great satisfaction in the evident change that her servant manifests in all her conduct and tempers." *

Sheffield. Sheffield was similarly blessed. Throughout a great part

* "Methodist Magazine," 1794, p. 650.

of the year many were brought to God; and the work continued to advance, seven or eight persons finding peace with God each night; until at length a still more glorious effusion of grace was realized, so that in three days above one hundred persons struggled into the kingdom of God.

It has been thought desirable to give as ample an account as possible of this great work,—not because it is the principal means looked to by Wesleyan Methodists for the maintenance or extension of the work of God. In this instance, although the revival extended to many Circuits, and produced an aggregate increase in these, on the year, of above three thousand members, the increase in the other parts of Great Britain and Ireland, where nothing of this extraordinary kind took place, exceeded five thousand. The steady and ordinary ministration of the Gospel is the great means of Wesleyan evangelization. But when these means are crowned with very copious effusions of the Spirit, they are hailed as special interpositions of mercy, for which the God of grace is gratefully adored. As these signal triumphs of redeeming mercy are not even now generally understood, our account has been studiously given as nearly as possible in the language of eye-witnesses, and in the manner in which they at the time published the case to the world.

This work of God was regarded as a fit subject for profane merriment and buffoonery. A company of strolling players at Halifax put out a handbill,* announcing their

* "To which will be added a favourite interlude, (never performed here,) called 'THE SECRET DISCLOSED,' the itinerant field orators' fanatical gibberish, lately delivered in this town, accompanied by all their pious ejaculations, celestial groans, and angelic swoonings, &c.: to conclude with a heaven-inspiring exit of young lambs, after their immaculate pastor. Orator, Mr. Grist. The flock by a chosen set."

intention to caricature the parties of all grades who had been connected with this revival. Yet, open to carnal and popular objection as some of these meetings might have been, the blessed results they produced were too patent to admit of this public profanation. A spirited handbill, signed "No-Methodist," called on the people of the town to put down this intended outrage on all religious propriety; and this movement was successful: neither the player's address in vindication of his purpose, nor his interlude, was allowed to proceed.

To this time so strictly did the Methodists of Leeds adhere to Wesley's purpose of keeping to the Church, that they had no service in their chapel from seven in the morning till half-past five in the evening. Many of the leaders and members strongly objected to this proceeding; and by these, after repeated efforts, in 1793, Bethel chapel was procured, fitted up, and opened for preaching even in church hours.

The Conference of 1794.

The Conference of 1794 was held at Bristol, and began June 28th. Thomas Hanby was elected president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The Circuits had now increased in number from 131 to 137. The following alterations were made:—Godalming, Wolverhampton, Greenock, and Kelso, ceased to be numbered as Circuits; while Harwich, Blandford, Launceston, Dudley, Lancaster, Malton, Brechin, Banff, Ballinamallard, and Innishowen became Circuits. The Minutes give 138 as the number, omitting altogether No. 121; but the correct account is found in the Magazine for the year. There was an increase, in the Missions in British America, of five Stations or Circuits, and of three men; and, in those of the West Indies, of three places, and of three men. The numbers reported to this Conference from Great Britain and

Scotland were 83,868, showing an increase on the year of 8,343. Those in British America and the West Indies were 7,846; making a total under the direction of the British Conference of 91,714.

In consequence of the political excitement which prevailed, the following question and answer were recorded on the Minutes:—"*Q.* Is it necessary to make any observations on the present important crisis of public affairs? *A.* We most affectionately entreat all our brethren, in the name of God, to honour the king. Let us duly pray for our rulers, and submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." Eleven names of preachers remained, at the close of this Conference, on the list of reserve. Dr. Coke was appointed to attend the next Irish Conference. Mr. Clarke of Coleraine was appointed head master of Kingswood school: he was father of Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Adam Clarke. On this occasion we find for the first time an address from the Irish Conference to the members of the British Conference entered upon the Minutes,—a practice which has been continued to the present time. Mr. Crowther has thus described the origin of this friendly and useful correspondence: "At this time there was a general and deep impression on the minds of the preachers in England, that the Irish brethren were much alienated from them in affection, and that they had thoughts of rendering themselves an independent body. To remove this impression as far as possible, the Irish Conference agreed to draw up an address to their English brethren, as a token of their affection and sense of obligation to them. I drew up one for them, which was unanimously adopted, and very cordially received by the English Conference. An

answer was returned to the next assembly of the Irish preachers."*

It is very difficult, by any collection of materials, to convey to the mind of the reader an adequate idea of the true character and extent of the evangelical labours of the Methodist preachers, and of the forbidding and disadvantageous circumstances in which many, indeed most of them, pursued their work of faith and self-sacrifice. Even at this time, although great progress had been made, the labour, exposure, and peril, to which preachers were exposed, were very great; and unfortunately these have generally been regarded by cursory observers as proofs of their want of cultivation and ability. Yet this conclusion is manifestly erroneous, as might be shown by numerous instances. At the Irish Conference of 1793, Matthew Lanktree (whose name has been already mentioned) was received as a probationer for the ministry, and placed on the list of reserve. Almost immediately after the Conference, a vacancy occurred in the Cavan Circuit, and he was sent to supply it. Early in September he was at his post, found out Mr. Alexander Moore, the superintendent, who received him kindly, and accompanied him part of the way to his first preaching-place; and then, says Mr. Lanktree, "before parting, he took me by the hand, and in the most solemn manner repeated the apostolic injunction to Timothy: (2 Tim. iv. 1, 2:) 'I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.' Had we been surrounded by thousands of wit-

Matthew Lanktree's entrance on the work of the ministry.

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1845, p. 318.

nesses," observes Mr. Lanktree, "the impressiveness of the occasion, to my mind, could scarcely have been exceeded. In the spirit of sacrifice and devotion, I proceeded to a country place called Garbratten, and took for my subject Luke iv. 18, and thus commenced my regular itinerancy. Our Circuit was extensive, and our ministerial labours necessarily abundant. The accommodations for man and horse were sometimes very disagreeable to nature; but I was saved from a disposition to complain, and generally found our dear friends kind and considerate. We had but few of those advantages which are now so generally furnished 'to make the man of God perfect;' but we were not destitute of some valuable helps for intellectual improvement. In addition to our Bibles and access to the throne of grace, there was also among us simplicity of heart, cordial love, and willingness to labour; and, being released from secular encumbrances, we had nothing to do but to save souls." *

We have not quoted the above because it exhibits any wonderful or uncommon feature of the history of Methodism at this period, but for the very opposite reason, —because it represents that which was ordinary and commonplace. But, regarded as such, is not this simple narrative deeply instructive? Here, indeed, we have no pomp of forms, no parade of ceremonial ritual; no glare of ecclesiastical arrangement meets the eye; no studied sounds either of music or oratory fall upon the ear. Yet who does not recognise in this case all the great elements of apostolical appointment, devotedness, and zeal? Here, on the mountains of Ireland, while the masses around are everywhere heaving with political throes, stand the veteran minister and the youthful evangelist. The soul-stirring

* M. Lanktree's "Biographical Narrative," p. 24.

charge, which fell full of heavenly influence from the heart of Paul on the soul of Timothy, is here given, if not with equal, yet certainly with similar unction, by the aged minister to his young brother; while the latter, nerved and impelled by this hallowed utterance and the sanctified determination of his own mind, goes forth to toil, privation, and hardship, having "nothing to do but to save souls." This was a ministry adapted to carry out the great purposes of grace, and to build up the church of God.

Joseph Entwisle at Colne.

Similar scenes are found, with similar piety and zeal, in other parts of the Methodistic field. Joseph Entwisle this year removed from Leeds—where the congregations were large, and religion in a very prosperous state; where all his temporal wants were met, and, indeed, every outward comfort provided for him—to Colne, where the congregations were small, and religion languished, a Circuit fifty miles in length, requiring almost continual travelling and much labour, and involving many varieties of privation and suffering; so that his pious wife entered the following pithy memorandum in her journal: "We have removed from Leeds to Colne; from *Goshen to the Wilderness.*" The preacher thus describes his entrance on this sphere of labour, and his own feelings thereon: "I have been out two days in the northern part of the Circuit. I find the people few in number, and not lively. At one place they are not willing to put themselves a little out of the way to provide the preachers lodging. For the sake of a number of poor people in the neighbourhood, I have promised them a sermon once a fortnight at noon. I called at another place to-day, which is in the Plan once a fortnight; but they cannot receive us more than once a month. At this place (Rimmington) I am received very

kindly by a pious widow and her son. While wandering in the hills, and with difficulty finding my way to the places, at a great distance from my dear wife, who is near her confinement, and my dear little boy, who is just begining of the small-pox, I have frequently found a gloom beginning to overspread my mind, but have been enabled to cast my burden upon the Lord, and He has sustained me. I feel the vast importance of my new station and office; near eleven hundred souls are committed to my care. Important charge! Who is sufficient for these things? O my God, give me much heavenly wisdom, much zeal for Thy glory ,much love to precious souls, much success in my poor labours, and, above all, much communion with Thyself!"*

We have elsewhere given a full account of the troubles through which the preachers and people connected with the Methodist Societies at Bristol passed this year, in consequence of the violent conflicts occasioned by their different opinions respecting the administration of the sacrament in Methodist chapels. Mr. Benson, doubtless with the most perfect and disinterested sincerity, supported the course taken by the trustees, and thereby placed himself in an unpopular position in regard to the people generally, who were favourable to the views advocated by Mr. Henry Moore and the major part of the Bristol Society.

By the manifestation of a noble Christian candour on the part of all the preachers engaged in this controversy, a plan had been sketched for effecting a settlement of the questions at issue, which had obtained the approval of the leading men in the Connexion. But the struggle through which Mr. Benson had passed had severely taxed his health and spirits, so that some change of scene and action

* "Memoir of Joseph Entwisle," p. 121.

seemed very desirable. Having therefore been informed that the proposed Plan of Pacification was universally approved by the Methodists of Cornwall, and that they most earnestly desired him to pay them a visit, he resolved to comply with their request. So, having arranged with Mr. Moore that the ensuing 26th of June should be observed as a day of fasting and prayer for the restoration of peace and concord, Mr. Benson set out, in company with a friend, on his journey to the west. Very few ministerial visits have been attended with more remarkable or more blessed results.

Mr. Benson's visit to Cornwall.

In accordance with the practice of the times, as to persons in similar circumstances, Mr. Benson and his friend travelled in a one-horse chaise. On the first day they reached Taunton in time for Mr. Benson to preach at seven o'clock. He observes, "The congregation was good, and I was much assisted in explaining and applying, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?'" Having preached again at six in the morning, he left Taunton and reached Collumpton, where in like manner he preached that evening, and on the next morning; he occupied the rest of the day in a short journey to Exeter, where he preached in the evening to a large congregation, enforcing, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." The next day brought him, after a long and weary journey, in time to preach at Launceston, which he did to a large and serious congregation. Thence he passed on to St. Austell. Mr. Benson had left Bristol on Tuesday morning, and consequently arrived at this town on Saturday evening, when he preached, and, remaining there the whole of the Sabbath, preached three times on that day to very crowded congregations. On the Monday morning he proceeded towards Truro, and about half-way was met by many of the friends from that town

and from Redruth, who had gone to meet him. He preached at Truro in the evening with great freedom and power to a crowded audience.

Remarkable success of his ministry.

Hitherto, although Mr. Benson had been uniformly received with kindness and respect, and had preached everywhere to large congregations, there was no extraordinary influence attending his ministrations, nor wonderful results produced. On the following day, however, he passed on to Redruth. In the evening the chapel was crowded to excess, and he preached from, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" &c. Of this service he wrote in his Journal, "Never did I see a place so crowded, I think, and never did I see a congregation more affected than at Redruth to-night." Many were deeply convinced of sin, and some obtained pardoning mercy, under that sermon. Hundreds were so deeply affected, that they remained in the chapel engaged in earnest prayer to God a great part of the night. The next day Mr. Benson preached at Tuckingmill. The author has heard that service described very many times by his father, who was one of the congregation. The chapel would not contain a quarter of the people assembled on the occasion; so the preacher was led to a meadow just above the present chapel to the south, whither at least five thousand persons followed him. Then, taking his stand on a table, he proceeded with the service, and preached from, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," &c. (1 Tim. i. 15.) The preacher says of this service, "I had not long spoken, before such ideas were presented to my mind, and words given me, that many were cut to the heart on all sides. Numbers were in tears, and many cried out in distress in different parts of the congregation. I continued to speak until I could speak no more. But I

observed, before I concluded, that any who were in distress might retire into the chapel, and that some of our friends would pray with them. I then gave out a hymn, and prayed. One woman came up to me before I got off the table, and, with streaming eyes and a heart full of gratitude and love, declared what God had done for her soul. As soon as I had dismissed the congregation, numbers thronged into the chapel.....The next morning I was informed that near twenty in all were brought that night to taste that the Lord is gracious; and many of our friends were of opinion that not fewer than one hundred were awakened under that sermon."* From the testimony of eye and ear-witnesses we are prepared to assert, that the above is a most modest statement, and conveys a very inadequate idea (as, indeed, any verbal description must) of the effects produced on this occasion. Nor must this be confounded with a revival in the usual sense of the word. Under these special outpourings of the Spirit almost any outward means, and often a variety, are rendered overwhelmingly powerful. Here the word of the minister, expounding and applying a passage of holy writ, containing nothing of a terrific nature, but full of encouragement, seemed imbued with the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost; so that numbers, without distinction of age or character, fell as the slain of the Lord before its resistless power. We have been personally acquainted with some of the best educated, most intellectual, and energetic men of this locality, who were brought to cry mightily to God for pardoning mercy under this discourse. An excellent minister, fully acquainted with the neighbourhood, observes on the above, "All that is said here falls greatly short of the facts. The impression still left on some persons,

* MACDONALD'S "Life of Benson," p. 279.

thirty-six years afterward, was deep and hallowed beyond example."

The next day (June 11th) Mr. Benson preached to a large congregation, and with powerful effect, at Hayle, and the day following to about fifteen hundred at St. Ives. These labours so affected his voice that he was scarcely audible at Penzance on the 12th. On the next day he visited the Land's End, and preached at St. Just in the evening. His mind was so much affected with the bold scenery of this neighbourhood, that he could not avoid incorporating an allusion to it in his sermon. He told the people, in reference to the prospect at the Land's End, that he "had just been looking from time into eternity," and reminded them "that they were almost come to the Land's End of life, and inquired whether they were come to the end of their sins, or were determined to go into the wide ocean of eternal misery."

On Sunday (June 14th) Mr. Benson preached in the morning at Penzance, and at Mousehole in the afternoon; and, as hundreds came who could not get into the chapel in the morning, and the congregation in the evening was much larger, he stood in the market-place, and addressed about six thousand persons on "the judgment to come." On his return, he preached again at Tuckingmill at mid-day. As the hour was so unpropitious, he expected a small congregation, but he found above ten thousand persons met together, to whom he preached with great power and blessed effect, from, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink," &c. (John vii. 37.) On the evening of the same day he preached to a still larger congregation at Gwennap, with such glorious success that, after he was exhausted, the people filled the chapel and continued in earnest prayer. Many were converted to God that night,

and others on the following morning. The remaining days of this week he was employed at Penryn and Falmouth, preaching to large and deeply serious congregations.

On Sunday, the 21st of June, Mr. Benson preached at St. Agnes in the morning, where about five thousand assembled to hear him speak with great power, while numbers wept under the word. On the afternoon of this day he preached in the street, before the market-house at Redruth. This was perhaps as great a congregation as he had seen in Cornwall; fourteen or fifteen thousand persons were supposed on this occasion to have filled the street, houses, alleys, and every available space; all the windows were crowded, and many people heard from the roofs and ridges of the houses. To these the preacher delivered a most remarkable and effective address, on, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." (Dan. v. 27.) Forty years after its delivery, we have heard persons who were present speak with rapture and astonishment of the marvellous ingenuity, appropriateness, and power of this discourse. From this place, after an interval, scarcely sufficient for him to get tea, he hastened to Gwennap, where, in and around the celebrated "PIT," about twenty thousand persons were estimated to be waiting to hear him. This vast assembly he addressed on the solemn subject, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God," &c., (Rev. xx. 12,) with great power and effect. Returning to Redruth, he preached there in the morning, at seven, on the parable of the sower. The chapel was crowded at this early hour; several were awakened, and at least one person entered into the glorious liberty of the children of God, under the sermon. On the evening of the same day he preached in a field near Truro to some thousands of people; and, pro-

ceeding towards Bristol, afterward preached at St. Austell, Bodmin, Camelford, and Liskeard.

Its important bearing on ministerial character.

We regard the very great power and success of Mr. Benson's ministrations on this tour with particular interest; not simply as exhibiting a certain amount of evangelical influence exerted for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom,—although, when thus considered, the labours of this journey were more important to the religious interests of mankind than many exertions which have been loudly and largely celebrated by the church,—but on other grounds as deserving especial notice. Mr. Benson, as we have said, was fully identified with the unpopular side of the Bristol disputes. Was he on this account to be regarded as a factious partisan? Those who advocated the cause which he espoused, were by a person, then a Methodist preacher, declared to be supporting a time-serving policy, which shrunk from the cross, courted the world, and was "carnal, sold under sin." Were these charges just? The vindication of Mr. Benson's religious character affords a full and complete reply. And does not the success attending his preaching in West Cornwall abundantly supply this? What can more fully establish the religious reputation of a Christian man and minister, than such abundant fruit of his labours? We see him at Bristol supporting the cause which he believed to be right, through evil report and good report; yet, zealous as he was in its support, he was prepared to meet its most energetic opponents in the spirit of Christian candour and love, and devise with them a plan of reconciliation. Having accomplished this desirable object, he takes a journey to visit some Christian friends. And how is his time employed? Not in elegant leisure, or intellectual exercises, but in preaching the Gospel of Christ with the

Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, to the awakening and conversion of hundreds, and the spiritual instruction of thousands. Differences of opinion and judgment among men of such piety and zeal will not injure, but tend ultimately to consolidate and build up the Christian body with which they are connected.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORY OF METHODISM FROM THE CONFERENCE OF 1795 TO THAT OF 1800.

THE Conference of 1795—Unfavourable Circumstances of the Country—Improved State of Feeling at Bristol—Disputes at Halifax—Persecuting Statute of St. Vincent disallowed by the King in Council—Abortive Attempt to found a colonial Mission in Africa—The Dairyman's Daughter converted to God—Lived and died a pious Methodist—Conversion of Mrs. Slacke—Its happy Results—Her pious Death—The Conference of 1796—The Course of Agitation pursued after the Expulsion of Mr. Kilham—Richard Watson a Preacher—Joseph Nightingale's first Conversion—Conversion and Labours of Thomas Geake—Dr. Coke again visits America—The happy Death of Mr. Thomas Hanby—The Conference of 1797—Declaration of the junior Preachers—Concessions of the Conference—Opposition of Mr. H. Moore—New Connexion inaugurated—Dr. Whitehead restored to the Society—Touching Incident in the Case of Adam Clarke—Mr. Pawson, and Wesley's MSS.—Results of the Agitation—Progress of the Work at Southampton—Remarkable Illustration of spiritual Religion—Fearful Consequences of the Rebellion in Ireland—Dr. Coke, and his Relation to America—The Conference of 1798—Pathetic Address of the Irish Conference—Dr. Coke's Project for having some Preachers episcopally ordained—Its Failure—Shipwreck and Sufferings of W. Jenkins—The Preachers' Fund improved—Peculiar Adaptation of Methodism for employing all Kinds of Talent—Dr. Coke—Samuel Hick—Gideon Ouseley—Revivals in Cornwall and Ireland—The Conference of 1799—Its Transactions—The Missions—The Preachers' Fund—The Book Room—Progress and Position of the Missions—Remarkable Conversion—Richard Watson's first Publication—Success of the Irish Mission—Fidelity of the instructed Negroes in Tortola—Its Results—Dr. Coke visits America—Daniel Isaac—George Lowe at Howden—Prosperity at Nottingham—Preachers' Life in Ireland—Threatened Persecution averted.

The Conference of 1795.

THE Conference of 1795 was held at Manchester, beginning on Monday, July 27th. Mr. Joseph Bradford was

chosen president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The number of Circuits was now 138. But, although there was only an increase of one Circuit, many changes took place. Sussex, Pembroke, Glamorganshire, Thirsk, Ayr, Banff, Aughrim, Innishowen, and Ballymena, ceased to give names to Circuits; while Rye, Newbury, Haverfordwest, Swansea, Merthyr-Tydvil, Rochdale, Boston, Ripon, Middleham, and Mountrath, are found in the list. The number of Mission stations or Circuits in British America remained the same as last year, with the same number of preachers, and the identical men. The Mission stations in the West Indies were reduced from ten to seven, and the preachers from seventeen to twelve; Anguilla, Grenada, and Dominica having ceased to appear on the list. The numbers in Society had increased in Great Britain and Ireland 5,476, the aggregate now being 89,344. And in British America and the West Indies the increase was 712, the total being 8,558.

The grand business of this Conference was the settlement of the Plan of Pacification; a full account of which has been given in a preceding chapter. Besides this, some other arrangements were made which merit notice.

Measures were adopted to prevent the unreasonably large attendance of preachers at Conference. It was resolved that no alteration should be made in the government of the Connexion, unless the same were first proposed and agreed to in full Conference. The embarrassed state of the Preachers' and Contingent Funds was fully set forth, and means for their improvement urged. Directions for the religious observance of the Lord's Day, for the administration of the Lord's Supper, for the change of stewards, against the use of tobacco and snuff by

preachers, and for the appointment of a regular Quarterly Fast-day, were also given.

The Methodistic year thus opened, preceded by the Plan of Pacification, from which settled peace in the Societies was expected, proved notwithstanding to be one of great trial, perplexity, and embarrassment to the preachers generally, and especially to those who took a leading part in connexional affairs. Great financial and commercial embarrassment prevailed throughout the country; a bad harvest, followed by serious reverses in war, in conjunction with a very extended political excitement, rendered the state of the nation most unsatisfactory.

Unfavourable circumstances of the country.

Nor had Methodism merely to struggle with these national and (as it respects its religious economy) external evils. Almost immediately after this Conference, Mr. Alexander Kilham, who had previously issued many anonymous publications adapted to excite the Methodists to discontent and opposition to their connexional economy, came out avowedly as a reformer of the system. The "Progress of Liberty," bearing his name as the author, was published in September, 1795; and produced intense and continued excitement throughout the Connexion. These circumstances were very unfavourable to the advancement of spiritual religion, and especially to evangelizing operations. Yet, spite of external and internal difficulties and oppositions, Methodism held on its way, and its ministrations were crowned with the divine blessing.

At Bristol, where there had been so much discord and dispute, a better spirit was induced. This was, indeed, partially effected before the Conference; for, when Mr. Benson returned from his tour into Cornwall, and the proposed Plan of Pacification which had been sketched was

Improved state of feeling at Bristol.

approved by Mr. Moore and his friends, harmony was so far restored that Mr. Benson and Mr. Moore exchanged pulpits; Mr. Benson preaching to a large congregation at Portland, and Mr. Moore conducting, in return, a very effective service in the chapel at Guinea Street. Unusual and unexplained circumstances detained Mr. Benson in Bristol until the early part of November, which afforded him the means of using all his influence with those who had been attached to him and the trustees, for perfecting the reconciliation which had been so auspiciously begun. He gladly availed himself of the opportunity; and, although further differences afterwards arose, which were not finally adjusted until 1797, no serious rupture took place.

Disputes at Halifax.

Similar Christian affection and discretion were not, however, universally displayed. Halifax was at this time, in regard of numbers and importance, the fourth country Circuit in the Connexion. Considerable difficulty had been felt there during the preceding year respecting the sacraments; a very large majority of the officers and members desiring to receive them from the preachers in their own chapels, while on the other hand a very respectable part of the Society, with a Mr. Samuel Waterhouse, an influential and wealthy member, at its head, was rigidly attached to the Church. This party, numbering five leaders and one hundred and twenty members, petitioned the previous Conference for a continued prohibition of the sacraments in Methodist chapels, urging that the decision by lot in 1792 to that effect ought, in their judgment, to be made perpetual, as having the sanction of the unchangeable Jehovah. When these persons found that the Conference, rejecting their request, had adopted the Plan of Pacification, they seceded from the Connexion, and at first held a lovefeast at the residence of Mr.

Waterhouse, where they seem to have had a very gracious season. But, sincere and conscientious as these persons might have been, they had taken a step for which they were entirely unprepared. They had provided no place for regular worship, nor had they the means of conducting it; so that, after being for some time as sheep having no shepherd, they began to lament their hasty departure from their former fold, and after a while nearly all of them returned to the Methodist body. Unfortunately, Mr. Waterhouse and a few others persisted in remaining in the unhappy isolated position in which they had placed themselves.

Persecuting statute of St. Vincent disallowed by the king in council.

After his return from the West Indies in 1793, Dr. Coke, accompanied by five or six of the preachers, waited on the Right Honourable Henry Dundas, one of his Majesty's principal secretaries of state, to know the result of the memorial which had been presented, praying for the abolition of the intolerant and persecuting Act of the House of Assembly of the Island of St. Vincent. The deputation were informed, "that his Majesty in council had been graciously pleased to disannul the Act of the Assembly of St. Vincent's, and that his Majesty's pleasure would be notified by the first packet that sailed to the West Indies." By this means religious liberty was granted to the inhabitants of that island, despite the intolerant efforts of the local government.

Encouraged by this success, in the following year Dr. Coke, not having forgotten the misery of the inhabitants of St. Eustatius, who were literally deprived of the Gospel by the tyranny of the governor, went over to Holland, in the hope of securing liberty of conscience for the inhabitants of that Dutch island. He succeeded in obtaining a personal interview with the stadtholder, who civilly listened

to his petition, but gave him no definite reply. After waiting a considerable time, he had to return disappointed to England.

Abortive attempt to found a colonial Mission in Africa.

The Doctor, still devoted to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, had his attention directed in the next instance to the feasibility of planting a colonial Mission, by means of pious and industrious artisans, in the Foulah country, on the West Coast of Africa. Having brought this scheme under the notice of those best acquainted with that country, he found that it was regarded with favour, and that great hopes were entertained of its success. An arrangement was accordingly made with five or six individuals, who were strongly recommended to him; and the Doctor, with his usual zeal, liberality, and energy, provided them with an ample outfit of tools, clothing, and other necessaries, and saw them sail from Portsmouth, January, 1796. The vessel safely reached her destination; but most of the persons proved to be very unsuitable for the enterprise in which they had engaged, and it soon became a total failure.

In reviewing the history and progress of an evangelical church, we frequently meet with cases of individual conversion, which, either on account of the marvellous display of the power of grace which they exhibit, or because of the extensive results which have arisen from them, rise into public and lasting importance. Such cases, however valuable as subjects for Christian biography, are equally just and proper elements of the general history of the church.

The Dairyman's Daughter.

One such conversion occurred at this time under the Methodist ministry in Southampton. It was that of Elizabeth Wallbridge, universally known as "the Dairyman's Daughter," the story of whose simple but earnest piety has been diffused through the world, by the beautiful tract of

Legh Richmond. This interesting young woman was a native of the Isle of Wight, and was at the time of her conversion living in the service of Mr. Rolstone, a gentleman resident in Southampton. The domestic attendants in this family were three females, and one man, named Robert Taylor, who was a Methodist. Elizabeth was proud, vain, and particularly fond of dress. Her brother, resident on the island, who had been brought to God, and joined the Methodist Society, under the influence of earnest Christian feeling had written Elizabeth a letter, in which he earnestly besought her to give her heart to God. It is very probable that she felt the full force of this appeal, although the only apparent effect produced by the letter was a violent prejudice against the Methodist Society. Southampton was at this time a part of Portsmouth Circuit; there was no chapel in the town, but the little Society rented a large room, which has been already mentioned, and in which public worship was conducted. There were four preachers on the Circuit; but the Societies provided for only three of them; the other, being regarded as a missionary, was wholly supported by the Conference. In the latter part of 1795, Elizabeth and a fellow-servant were in one of the rooms of their master's house at work, when Robert Taylor came in and said, "Maids, will you go this evening and hear preaching in the Methodist chapel? Mr. Crabbe, the missionary from the Isle of Wight, is to preach. He is very much liked as a preacher; and I think, if you were to go and hear for yourselves, you would be pleased with him." Elizabeth Wallbridge gave him a prompt reply, which left him no hope that she would comply with his request. Nevertheless, she and her companion talked over this strange proposal, for as such they regarded it. Curiosity,

doubtless, was at work; Elizabeth in all probability wanted to know something of the people with whom her brother had become associated; more than this, she had a new gown which she wished to exhibit. So, when the time arrived, Elizabeth and her female companion attended the preaching. Mr. Crabbe selected for his text, "Be clothed with humility." Although the sermon was a direct attack on Elizabeth's ruling passion, she respected the preacher and the service, and both the girls determined to attend again. They did so, when Mr. Crabbe preached from, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." (Zech. iv. 7.) It was a memorable time: the mountain flowed down at the presence of the Lord. While the preacher, with the authority of an ambassador for Christ, bore hard on the sins of vanity, selfishness, and pride, Elizabeth Wallbridge saw that she was the very reverse of being clothed with humility. Wounded by the sword of the Spirit, she returned home in silence, indignant at herself. There was now no foolish talking and jesting about things sacred; her finery was all removed; henceforth her attire was neat, but particularly plain. She gave her heart to God, and herself to His people, and realized the love of God shed abroad in her heart, and the blessedness of Christian communion.

Converted to God.

Within the year following her conversion, Elizabeth's health failed, and she returned to her parents. Getting a little better, she went to reside in a pious Methodist's family at West Cowes. After this, she lived in other Christian families, to render what service she could, her state of health not allowing her to take a regular servant's place. At length she was confined by weakness to her father's cot-

Lived and died a pious Methodist.

tage, where Mr. Richmond found her, and rendered much religious consolation to the dying saint. Her Methodist friends, however, were her constant companions; they surrounded her dying bed, and followed her remains to the grave. The "remarkably decent-looking woman," of whom Mr. Richmond speaks, was Mrs. Prangnell, of Merston, the leader of a Class there, with whom Elizabeth met, when in that neighbourhood.*

Whether Mr. Legh Richmond knew that Elizabeth Wallbridge was a Methodist, cannot now be ascertained. Most assuredly he was mistaken as to the instrument of her conversion, and it is very likely that he did not know that any Methodist preacher was generally called a "missionary," and was in consequence misled by the appellation. Indeed, this seems to be certain, from a conversation which took place between Mr. Crabbe, under whose ministry she was brought to God, and Mr. Richmond himself. We give the account from a letter written by the former. Mr. Crabbe says, "I was well acquainted with that deservedly beloved servant of Christ; and I once ventured to ask him at his own house, 'Pray, did you know the instrument of Elizabeth's conversion?' 'No,' was the answer; 'but I expect it was under the ministry of a missionary, who was going abroad—to New South Wales. I think it must have been Mr. Marsden.' The remark evidently showed how he had misunderstood Elizabeth's reference to a missionary. I said no more, only rejoicing in my heart that the Holy Spirit had converted her." † In the same spirit we rejoice, however the fact may be unknown generally, that the pious and amiable subject of the tract, of which more than four millions of copies have been circulated, and which, it is said, is known to have been the

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1838, p. 107. † *Ibid.*, p. 108.

means of the conversion of three hundred and fifty persons, was the direct fruit of Methodist preaching in the bricklayer's loft at Southampton.

Conversion of Mrs. Slacke.

The following case may rank under the same general category as the foregoing:—The lady of a gentleman of station and property, resident in Annandale, county of Leitrim, Ireland, named Slacke, being on a visit to Dublin, took lodgings at a respectable bookseller's, whose two apprentices were Methodists eminently devoted to God. These young men slept in one room, and it was their constant practice, before retiring, to read a portion of God's word, and pray together. Another young man, also an apprentice in the house, was generally with them on those occasions. As this room was immediately above the apartments occupied by Mrs. Slacke, she frequently heard sounds, which for some time she could not understand. At length, prompted by curiosity, she went quietly upstairs, and listened at their room-door. She was much impressed at first with the novelty of the thing. Her heart became deeply affected, and she was led to repeat her visits to the room-door. Upon inquiry, she found they were members of the much despised Methodist Society; and, although she was a lady of most accomplished manners, and had mixed in the most fashionable society, she now discovered there was something in religion to make the soul happy, and which she had not experienced. She ventured to hear preaching at Whitefriars Street. The word was greatly blessed to her soul; and, on her return home, she resolved to exert her influence to introduce Methodism into her family. But, fully aware of her husband's High Church principles, she had to proceed with great caution. Her first attempt was to induce Mr. Slacke to invite Mr. Creighton, a pious clergyman, to preach in Annandale: he did so, and

promised to come again. Mr. Creighton, being very friendly with Mr. Alexander Blair, the Methodist preacher at Sligo, engaged him to go also to Annandale on his next visit. This was done; Mr. Creighton preached in the morning; and, after the preaching, Mr. Slacke was asked if he had any objection to a Methodist preacher's giving them a sermon in the evening. His heart had been touched by the sermon, and he consented; but asked, "Where is he?" Mr. Blair, whose appearance was very youthful, was pointed out to him, when he expressed his astonishment by saying, "What! that boy a preacher?" Mr. Blair, who possessed more than ordinary ministerial talent, delivered a most impressive discourse, which was much blessed to Mr. Slacke and his family. From that period the Methodist preachers regularly visited Annandale. The amiable and pious lady who had thus introduced Methodism to her family and neighbours, continued steady in her attachment to it to the end of her life. In the year 1795 she became delicate, but was still able to come down stairs. One evening, she retired, as usual, for reading and prayer; but as she came not down as she was accustomed to do, one of the family went to ascertain the cause, when she was found on her knees in the attitude of prayer, but her spirit had entered into the joy of her Lord.*

Its happy results: her pious death.

The Conference of 1796 was held in London, July 25th. Mr. Thomas Taylor was chosen president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The number of Circuits in Great Britain and Ireland had now increased to 143. This addition was made by the following changes:—Merthyr Tydvil and Charlemont ceased to be Circuits; and Cardiff, Barrow, Pontefract, Youghal, Connamara, Dungannon, and Armagh, became Circuits. At the bottom of the list of Circuits we

The Conference of 1796.

* From the MS. account of the late Rev. Mr. Fergusson.

find the following:—"Missionaries for Africa, Archibald Murdoch, William Patten." A note at the foot of the page states, that, Dr. Coke having reported to the Conference the failure of the attempt to establish a colony in the Foulah country, in Africa, "after prayer and mature consideration, the Conference unanimously judged that a trial should be made in that part of Africa, on the proper missionary plan. The two brethren above mentioned having voluntarily offered themselves for that important work, the Conference solemnly appointed them for it, and earnestly recommended them and their great undertaking to the public and private prayers of the Methodist Society."* There were at this time twelve missionaries in British America, being an increase of one; and twelve also in the West Indies,—the same number as last year.

The number of members now reported from the Circuits in Great Britain and Ireland, was 95,226, being an increase of 5,882; and those from British America and the West Indies, 9,653, being an increase of 1,095.

After the trial and expulsion of Mr. Kilham, the Conference enacted several important regulations. It was resolved: "From henceforward we recommend it to every Circuit to provide the horse or horses necessary for that Circuit. But if any Circuit choose rather for the preachers to ride their own horses, we submit, on this condition, that no preacher shall make any collection or subscription toward paying for horses; but that all collections judged needful for this purpose shall be made either by the Circuit stewards, or the stewards of the particular Societies."

It was further resolved: "Let no man, nor number of men, in our Connexion, on any account or occasion, circulate letters, call meetings, do, or attempt to do,

* Minutes, 8vo., vol., i. p. 335.

anything new, till it has been first appointed by the Conference."

"No person shall be suffered on any pretence to receive the Lord's Supper among us, unless he be a member of our Society, or receive a note of admission from the assistant, which note must be renewed quarterly."

"As we desire to have every proper information on whatever concerns ourselves or our people, we will gladly receive intelligence not only from our Quarterly and Leaders' Meetings, but from any individual member of our Society, as well at the District Meeting as at the Conference."

As some statements had been made during the preceding year, calculated to damage the Conference in the estimation of the people, we are informed that "the letters and addresses were read in full Conference, and a committee appointed to examine them and report to the Conference;" and it is added, "And this is the way that is always done, if the letter or address is of the least moment." *

The course of agitation pursued after the expulsion of Mr. Kilham.

Mr. Kilham having been expelled, he was free to pursue his own course of action, and might have devoted his time and energy to the dissemination of the Gospel, in any locality where his admirers were sufficiently numerous to afford him support; but such a return to the peaceful labours of a Gospel minister did not accord with his views. On the contrary, he exerted himself to the utmost to induce the Methodist people to adopt his opinions, and to coerce their ministers into compliance with his will. The following is an extract from an "Address" published soon after the expulsion of Mr. Kilham, and signed by one hundred and sixty-seven leaders, &c., of Leeds, who had adopted Mr. Kilham's views,

* MYLES'S "Chronological History," p. 237.

and united with him to carry them into practical operation. Addressing the people, but especially the trustees, leaders, stewards, and local preachers, it tells them that "they had nothing to do, but to exert the influence which was in their hands, to have everything established which was necessary for their future prosperity. Those of them who were trustees had the whole power of the chapels in their hands, whether they were fixed on the Conference plan or not. The preachers being supported by their voluntary subscriptions, if they would not come into their measures, they had the power to withhold support from them. If this method were taken, the body of the preachers would see that their dependence was upon the people, and not upon what is generally called the Conference. They would probably throw off the authority of those who now govern, and would become the people's servants for Christ's sake; the ruling party would be brought to submit or retire: but should all the travelling preachers stand it out against them, and refuse to supply the chapels on those terms, it would be possible to prevail on pious acceptable local preachers to come out to their help. In this way corruption would be purged out of the Connexion, and everything would be brought into a flourishing state."

We will not stay here to investigate the morality of the proposal to starve ministers of the Gospel into a compliance with principles and practices which they in their judgment and conscience condemned, but proceed to direct attention to the means which were recommended as likely to be successful in attaining these objects. "Either in Leaders' Meetings, (or rather call more public meetings in the principal Societies,) converse freely with each other, and advise upon the best mode of seeking a redress of

grievances. Invite leaders, stewards, trustees, local preachers, and others, to meet together, (without the preachers,) from all parts of the Circuit, that you may mutually deliberate on the best plans that can be devised, to save the Connexion from ruin. Let nothing deter you from this; neither the threatenings nor the promises of any preachers. In them draw up your sentiments freely, and appoint two or more of your body to meet delegates in a special District Meeting from the other Circuits. The Circuit Meetings should be held in May, (1797,) if possible. The delegates of the Circuits should meet in the most central place in the District, about the middle of June, and deliberate on the most eligible plan to propose to the Conference. It would be well to print their views on the subject, and not only send them through their own District, but to the different Districts. Send by all means a suitable number of delegates to the next Conference. If the delegates are firm, and will not be moved on any pretence whatever, a majority of the preachers are sure to come into their measures."

When such a course of turbulent agitation was so earnestly recommended to the members of a voluntary religious society, and urged with such specious arguments, the mind must be prepared to expect very serious injury to the religious character and progress of the body. Enough of this occurred to alarm the boldest, and distress the firmest, of the Methodist preachers. One of them, writing to a friend, expresses himself thus: "No very good news! Leeds is in a flame of contention. Mr. Kilham is to fix his residence there, and from thence the rays of the 'Methodist Monitor,' a periodical publication by A. K., are to illuminate the three kingdoms. Manchester, Liverpool, and Chester are in a distracted state. We enjoy

perfect peace everywhere in this Circuit, (Wakefield,) Barnsley excepted. There a few violent persons carry matters to an extreme. They used formerly to meet to discuss politics, now they meet to discuss *Methodistical politics*. O, what danger there is of religion, love to God and man, suffering by these disputes! There is a great appearance of a division in the body now. How these will terminate, God only knows. We are like chaos. But He can bring order out of confusion." *

The confident expectation of the agitators, and the alarm and apprehension of sound Methodists, were both fully sustained by the events of the day: considering the difference of opinion which obtained, not only among the people, but also among the preachers themselves, there was no rational probability that the Connexion could withstand the cumulative agencies which were employed to disturb and distract it. Either a ruinous division, or an equally ruinous prostration of all power before an unlimited democracy, seemed inevitable. Nor can we find in history a more manifest display of providential interposition, than was witnessed in the result. The "Methodist Monitor" *was* circulated, the principal Societies *were* visited, no efforts were spared; yet—but we will not anticipate the details of the ensuing Conference. Methodism, however, was not destroyed,—was scarcely injured by the storm.

Richard Watson a preacher.

The Conference of 1796 is memorable in the annals of Methodism, as being that which sent Richard Watson into the ministry. This great man was an extraordinary person at a very early age. When only fourteen, he was six feet two inches high; but the development and maturity of his intellectual powers were much more remarkable than that of his physical system. Converted to God in the first year of

* "Life of Joseph Entwisle," p. 147.

his apprenticeship, he began to preach when about fifteen years of age. After he had laboured a few months as a local preacher, his master, being deeply impressed with the conviction that his abilities qualified him for a position superior to that of a labouring tradesman, generously gave up his indentures, and released him from all further obligation. In a few months more, Mr. Watson was sent to supply the place of Mr. Thomas Cooper, whose health had failed in the Newark Circuit; and at this Conference, when only sixteen years and six months old, he was appointed as Mr. Cooper's colleague in the Ashby-de-la-Zouch Circuit; although, on account of his youth, his name does not appear in the Minutes, neither in the list of preachers received on trial, nor in connexion with the Circuit, which for that year has only two preachers' names instead of three. His name was intended to be entered, as having travelled one year, in 1797; but in the octavo Minutes, both in the list of preachers, and in connexion with the Castle-Donington Circuit, it is misprinted "Robert Watson."

Joseph Nightingale's first conversion.

In the Methodist Magazine for 1797, under the heading of "The Conversion of a Deist," there is a very interesting account in a letter to Mr. B. Rhodes. It details the case of a young man, the son of members of the Church of England, who was ignorant of the principles of any denomination of Christians, until he was bound an apprentice to a Socinian, when he attended a Unitarian chapel. Possessing an inquiring and energetic mind, he diligently read the works of Priestley, Hopton, and other writers of that school, and fully imbibed the doctrines of Socinianism and Materialism. He afterward, by reading extracts from Paine's works, was induced to take the one remaining step, and plunge into the thick darkness of Deism. The opera-

tion of these principles was soon seen in his conduct; for he says that he was regarded "by almost all who knew him, in the village where he lived, as little less than a devil incarnate." In this state he was hurried into crimes "too shocking to mention," which involved him in so much shame and trouble, that he meditated suicide. After suffering the greatest misery, he details the means by which he was led to believe that he had a soul, and that there was truth in the word of God. He then joined the Methodist Society, found pardoning mercy, and says, "My soul was filled with redeeming love, and peace which passeth all understanding. This was on the 18th of June, 1796." This letter was signed "J. N.,"—the initials of the celebrated Joseph Nightingale. We have been more particular in describing at length this his first connexion with Methodism, as we shall have repeated occasion to refer to him in the course of the History.

Conversion and labours of Thomas Geake.

Few men, not fully devoted to the work of the ministry, were more useful in spreading the religion of Christ at this period, than Mr. Thomas Geake, of St. Germains, in the south-east of Cornwall. He was brought to a knowledge of salvation principally by the ministry of Dr. Adam Clarke, when he, then a very young man, was stationed in the Plymouth Circuit in 1785. Soon after his conversion Mr. Geake had it powerfully impressed on his mind that he ought to preach, and, after much serious consideration and prayer, he began to call sinners to repentance. Spiritual religion was at that time but little known in the district in which he resided, and the work of a preacher involved not only serious labour, but great danger. Yet the claims of the people on those whom the truth had made free were very great; it might be truly said, that souls were "perishing for

lack of knowledge." In many respects, Mr. Geake was well adapted for the work upon which he had entered. He was tall and robust in person, had a powerful voice, possessed sound, sterling sense, and uncommon intrepidity of mind. All these were needed; for the clergy and magistrates of the neighbourhood manifested every disposition to prevent Methodist preaching, as far as the law would allow; while wild lawless mobs were everywhere prepared to attempt the same object by brutal violenee. In consequence of this opposition, it was necessary for preachers to have all the protection afforded by the law. Mr. Geake, his brother Richard, (also a local preacher,) and the Rev. Mark Daniel of Launceston, therefore went to Exeter, and obtained licences to preach, as it was scarcely possible to obtain them from the prejudiced magistrates in their own neighbourhood.

On one occasion, while Mr. Geake was preaching at Wollaton, in the parish of St. Mullion, a mob entered the house with a large goat, for the purpose of disturbing the congregation; but, not succeeding in this, they cried out, "We will pull down the preacher;" and immediately endeavoured to put their threat into execution. While the people were endeavouring to protect him from their violence, Mr. Geake said, "Make way for them to come forward, and not one of them will dare to touch me." When they were come up to him, their courage forsook them, and they stood speechless. Mr. Geake then took up the Bible, and said to them, "Now hear me for half an hour; and, if I say anything contrary to this Book, do with me as you please!" They did hear with attention, and went away apparently satisfied. The leader of this mob soon afterward became a Methodist.

In the year 1796, Mr. Geake and his brother began

preaching at Trehunist, in the parish of Quethiock. In this place they were opposed by a mob, who pelted them with putrid eggs, &c., and manifested the most determined hostility. The two brothers, however, persisted in their work, and, when thus molested, summoned the offenders before the magistrates, when, although with the most manifest reluctance, their worships were compelled by the force of evidence, and the express terms of the law, to convict the offenders. But the *animus* of the bench is clearly apparent, from the following conversation, which took place immediately after the conviction. "As Mr. Geake was retiring from the room, one of the magistrates called out, 'Geake, I am informed that you pretend to inspiration; but I tell you that inspiration has ceased since the days of the apostles. And you also say, that you are sent of God to preach the Gospel. Now, remember, if I ever hear that you pretend to inspiration again, or that you profess to be sent of God to preach the Gospel, I will send you to jail for six months for the first offence; and for the second, I will transport you for seven years; for I am a quorum.' But this gentleman was not aware of the character with whom he had to deal. Mr. Geake replied, 'You need be at no trouble to collect information; for I will make a confession before you, that I believe God hath inspired me by His Holy Spirit, and hath sent me to preach the Gospel. Now, Sir, make out my *mittimus*, and send me to jail.' The utmost confusion and mortification now became visible in the magistrate's countenance, which he endeavoured to conceal by spreading a book before him. The bench was then referred to the solemn affirmation made by clergymen on the subject. After Mr. Geake and his friends had retired, the defendant and his associates expressed their disappointment at not being at liberty to annoy the

Methodist preachers, when it was replied, 'Would to God we could suppress them! but the law is on their side.'" * Thus, although harassed and persecuted in his person and in his business, Mr. Geake and his fellow-labourers held on their way, and were largely instrumental in diffusing the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ through a previously neglected and destitute district.

Dr. Coke again visits America.

Soon after the Conference of 1796, Dr. Coke made another voyage to America. He sailed from Gravesend on the 6th of August, and soon found that, although he had paid a heavy sum for his passage and provisions, he had fallen into very bad hands. The accommodation was of the worst description, and the conduct of the captain extremely depraved and brutal. After a very unpleasant passage, they got sight of the American coast on the 3rd of October, and in a few days were safe on shore. Here the doctor pursued his usual course of preaching, travelling, and attending Conferences, and was received with great affection and respect, by preachers and people, wherever he went. The heartiness of this reception contrasted strongly with the coldness and suspicion with which many persons in England had regarded him, on account of the zeal and activity displayed by him in many of the troubles through which the Connexion was called to pass. When he considered this, and remembered the clouds which still lowered over Methodism in England, his heart yearned to make his home in America; and when this feeling became known, it was received with delight, and an arrangement made between him and the General American Conference, (which met that year,) that he should return to England for the settlement of his affairs, and come back to make his permanent residence in America; unless, in compliance with

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1838, p. 567.

any request that might be made, the American Conference should voluntarily consent for him to withdraw from his engagement. The doctor returned to England just before the Conference of 1797.

The happy death of Mr. Thomas Hanby.

We cannot close the annals of this Methodistic year without noticing the death of Thomas Hanby, who was president of the Conference in 1794, and, after Wesley, the first who, having filled that office, departed this life. He entered on the work of the ministry in 1754, and had consequently laboured in that vocation forty-three years. He was an acceptable and very useful preacher; indeed, John Pawson, giving an account of his life, says, "a burning and a shining light." His death, although preceded by great pain, was eminently peaceful and happy. He passed away in the full assurance of faith, to be for ever with the Lord.

The Conference of 1797.

The Conference of 1797 was held at Leeds, and began on the 1st of August. Never had the Methodist preachers entered on the work of their annual assembly under circumstances of so much difficulty and danger to the Connexion.

The first business attended to was a careful revision of the established rules of the body. As previously mentioned, Mr. Pawson had revised the Large Minutes, omitting what, in his judgment, had become obsolete, and adding such regulations as had been subsequently enacted. This amended form, thus produced, was read over to the Conference, then fully considered paragraph by paragraph; and, when the whole was finally settled, it was signed by every preacher present, except one, who withdrew and joined Mr. Kilham.

Meanwhile the junior preachers met by themselves, induced to do so by reports which had been circulated

during the agitation of the preceding year. The result of their deliberations at this meeting was the production of the following Declaration :—

Declaration of the junior preachers.

"VARIOUS unkind reflections having been thrown out, in certain publications, concerning such of the senior preachers as are said to direct and manage our Connexion, as if they were 'tyrants and oppressors,' and the other preachers but mere 'cyphers,' we, whose names are underwritten, think it our duty to repel such reflections by declaring that, instead of considering our senior brethren in the light of 'tyrants and oppressors,' we feel ourselves under great obligations to them for their extraordinary labour and fatigue in the service of the Conference. We are satisfied that their piety, abilities, faithfulness, diligence, usefulness, and long continuance in the work of the ministry, entitle them to the respect and esteem of the whole Connexion: and though we are taught by our Saviour to 'call no man master upon earth,' yet, regarding them as our fathers, we conceive it our duty to hear them speak in our Conferences, with that deference which is due to their age and character, especially as we are persuaded they have greatly contributed to keep the body one in the Lord. We should think it an honour to wash their feet; and our desire and prayer is, to follow them as they have followed Christ."

This Declaration was signed by ninety-seven preachers. Their signatures were followed by this statement :—

"A CERTAIN person has informed the public, in print, that 'the junior preachers were required to sign the above Declaration, or quit the Connexion,' and has made plausi-

ble comments upon the circumstance, on that ground. But the whole Conference know, and especially those who signed it, that this is as absolutely false as anything that ever was published. No person was *required* to sign it; and no man was threatened with expulsion or any thing else, in case he did not sign. Every man was left entirely to his own choice. The junior brethren met by themselves, spoke freely and largely upon the subject, drew up, unanimously agreed to, and cheerfully signed the Declaration, as a *free-will offering* in vindication of the reputation of those who deserve so well of the Methodist Connexion.

"Signed by desire of the junior preachers,

"JONATHAN CROWTHER, *Chairman.*

"*Leeds, August* 15*th*, 1797."

At this Conference, Dr. Coke was elected president, and Mr. S. Bradburn secretary. The number of the Circuits was this year increased from 143 to 145, through the following changes:—Harwich, Bury, Banbury, Blandford, Alderney, Boston, Berwick, Connamara, Mallow, Armagh, ceased to be numbered as Circuits; while Weatherfield, Brackley, Bradford, Poole, Thetford, Banwell, Stroud, Burton, Miltown, Charlemont, Spalding, and Doncaster, became Circuits. In the British dominions in America the number of preachers was reduced from thirteen to eight. In the West Indies the number was fourteen, as last year. The number of members reported from the British Islands was 99,519, being an increase of 4,293: those in British America and the West Indies were 8,742, being a decrease of 911.

Concessions of the Conference.

As already stated, the great business of this Conference was the revision of Methodist discipline, which was done

by enacting several rules, afterward embodied in a circular letter, and sent to the Societies, signed by the president and secretary, under date, "August 7th, 1797," and "Sundry Miscellaneous Regulations," which are appended to the circular letter, and given at length in the Minutes for the year.* It deserves notice that these concessions were warmly opposed by Mr. Henry Moore, who regarded them as a serious inroad on the constitution left to the care of the preachers by Wesley. He greatly feared they would offer serious obstruction to the proper government of the Societies, and tend to introduce a local and worldly spirit into the discipline. So strongly, indeed, was Mr. Moore influenced by these objections, that, when the new rules were passed by the Conference, he felt strongly disposed to leave the Connexion. It will serve to show the difficulty in which the Conference was placed in regard to this subject, when we find a large-minded and liberal minister, like Mr. Moore, recording his deliberate judgment of this measure in the following terms:—"The strangest thing which ever occurred among a body of men has now occurred in the Methodist Conference: they have conceded by one act all their authority, thereby violating Mr. Wesley's wish and intentions in reference to the work."†

Opposition of Mr. H. Moore.

These regulations settled the disciplinary economy of Methodism. It is not intended by this expression to affirm that the code of Methodist law was thereby rendered so complete that no further alteration or addition was required, or possible. The very reverse is the fact: indeed, the nature of the system is such,—its adaptation to meet the changing circumstances of society, and provide for the various religious exigencies of mankind, is so extensive,—that the final com-

* See Appendix N, at the end of this volume.

† Mrs. Smith's "Life of Moore," p. 164.

pletion of its disciplinary code is neither to be expected nor desired. The clearly defined providential path of Methodism is to pursue with undeviating fidelity its great object of spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land, and from time to time to make such changes in its rules, in accordance with the original and essential principles of its constitution, as are judged to be necessary to promote its more extensive usefulness.

What we mean by affirming the disciplinary economy of Methodism to have been then settled is, that these essential and original principles were fully recognised and maintained. The integrity of Conference, as consisting only of itinerant preachers, the authority of the pastorate, and the validity of District Committees, were by these acts fully established; and, indeed, recognised as essential elements of the Methodist economy. To guard against all improper exercise of this authority, to adapt the action of these elements in the fullest degree to the great object for which the Connexion was formed, the various arrangements and regulations now propounded were devised. And this was done in such a manner that these regulations could be altered or extended, as circumstances might require; but the three essential institutes above mentioned were made unchangeable and perpetual, and rendered incapable of alteration except by an entire revolution of the whole system.

New Connexion inaugurated.

Mr. Kilham, and those who shared his opinions, inaugurated the New Connexion on the democratic basis which he had so long advocated. Looking away from all the antecedents of the case, we cannot feel the slightest objection to this measure. Methodism, in its evangelical and itinerant operation, had accomplished immense good, and was adapted to exercise the most potent and lasting influence on the religious condition of the country and the world. Of the

persons brought to God through this instrumentality, and endowed with abilities for extensive usefulness, some (a very small minority, indeed) entertained views altogether different from those of their brethren respecting some essential elements of Methodism. They did, in these circumstances, what they had a perfect right to do: they left the Wesleyan Connexion, and founded another on their own principles. The result of this measure was to maintain an unabated aggression of Methodist agency on the spiritual darkness and wickedness of the country; and, at the same time, to afford a home, and a place of usefulness, throughout all the future, for those who entertained similar views respecting the constitution of the church, and the exercise of Christian discipline. Henceforth there could be no reason for the slightest objection to the principles of the original Methodists; for, whoever desired a nearer approach to democracy in church discipline, could find it ready prepared to their hand in the New Connexion. And the future progress of the two bodies would test, not, indeed, the relative scriptural character of each, but certainly the extent to which the Methodist people of this country entertained the respective views of the two denominations.

Besides Mr. Kilham, who was expelled, five Methodist preachers left the Conference, and joined him in the formation of the New Connexion:—W. Thom, who bore a very respectable character as a man of sense and piety, and possessed considerable learning: he had travelled twenty-three years:—Alexander Cumming, who had travelled six years:—Stephen Eversfield had travelled five years. These remained for some time in the New Connexion. Mr. Eversfield ultimately became an Independent minister. The other two preachers who left the Conference, returned before its sittings were concluded. The first of these, Michael

Emmett, came back to his brethren on the 10th of August, saying, "My intention was pure in going away. I thought I could promote the work of God more with them than with the old Connexion; but I am convinced there is little of God among them." Mr. Henry Taylor, after several days' deep distress, also returned to the Conference, "convinced of his error in leaving us, and deeply humbled before God and man." He said, "It is one thing to read men's writings, and another to see them act." *

Dr. Whitehead restored to the Society.

One of the events of Methodist history this year was the restoration of Dr. Whitehead to his former position as a member and local preacher. The trustees of City Road, after the irritation caused by the publication of the doctor's Life of Wesley had passed away, looked with favour on him, and felt strongly disposed to allow him to preach in the chapel. And Mr. Pawson, at that time superintendent of the London Circuit, was much inclined to promote their object, and to meet Dr. Whitehead's wishes, by giving him a Society ticket, and placing his name on the Plan. It had been proposed, that before his restoration he should make some acknowledgment of the impropriety of his conduct in respect of Wesley's papers, and his Life of Wesley; and on these terms the Leaders', Quarterly, and Local Preachers' Meetings had agreed to his restoration. Unfortunately by none of these meetings were the terms of the proposed acknowledgment, or even its character or extent, specified. But in the course of the week ending October 21st, 1797, Adam Clarke, who was then one of the London preachers, learned that the City Road trustees had resolved that the doctor should preach in the chapel on the ensuing Sabbath; and that the superintendent, Mr. Pawson, who was then engaged

* Rev. Joseph Entwisle's Journal, Memoir, p. 157.

in making a new preachers' Plan, had actually in the draught of it placed Dr. Whitehead's name at the head of the list of local preachers. Mr. Clarke attended the Preachers' Meeting on the Saturday, and earnestly objected to this course, urging the two points already noticed, together with the fact, that Dr. Whitehead had done much injury to Methodism by the assistance he had given to Mr. Kilham; and concluded by moving that Dr. Whitehead "should not be restored to a place among us on the Plan, nor preach in any of our chapels, until after the approaching Conference, unless he made an adequate acknowledgment." And, although much against Mr. Pawson's wishes, who in this case was supported by Dr. Coke, this resolution was carried. Dr. Whitehead's name did not, in consequence, appear on that Plan; but he did preach in City Road chapel the following day, by the authority of the trustees, and with the consent of Mr. Pawson, who thought, as the trustees were determined to secure this object, that, for the sake of peace, it would better be done with the concurrence of the superintendent, than in defiance of his authority.

Touching incident in the case of Adam Clarke.

While Mr. Clarke was, almost alone, resisting this measure, he performed an act of heroism which was very noble, although, in all probability, it was equally unnecessary. It has been already stated that Mr. Clarke's father had formerly been appointed master of Kingswood School; and that, not being deemed suitable for the situation, he received fifty pounds from the Conference, to enable him to remove, and as a consideration for his leaving unexpectedly. During the painful discussion above referred to respecting Dr. Whitehead's restoration, when Mr. Clarke's opposition to the measure was so earnest, after it had been found that he was quite proof against what he calls "flattery," it was hinted to him that his father had been a great expense

to the Connexion, and that, if he persisted in his opposition, the fact might be mentioned in such a manner as would be painful to his feelings. This he regarded as a threat; and against anything of the kind his noble, independent soul rose in strong resistance. He immediately sold the best of his books and philosophical instruments, (which he describes as parting with his "heart's blood,") and paid down the fifty pounds to the credit of the Kingswood School Fund; thus proving that he was determined, at any cost, to follow the decision of his judgment, and the dictates of his conscience. We regard this as a fine proof of the sensitive delicacy, the elevated nobility, of Adam Clarke's mind. It also shows in a painful manner the extent to which the undue earnestness of good men, under the influence of human frailty, may inflict suffering and injury on one another.

Mr. Pawson, and Wesley's manuscripts.

Mr. Pawson was a very good man, and a useful preacher; but, beyond the study of divinity, his literary taste was of a very humble character. When Dr. Whitehead had finished his Life of Wesley, he returned the papers and manuscripts, which he had so long retained in his possession, to the book steward, Mr. George Storey, by whom they were deposited in the superintendent's house, in the custody of Mr. Pawson. This preacher, no doubt with the best intentions, took upon himself to examine these papers, and to destroy what he thought useless. By this rash procedure, it is feared, many documents of great interest were irrecoverably lost. Indeed, this Gothic spirit did not find sufficient gratification in the burning of manuscripts. There was in Wesley's library in that house a fine quarto edition of Shakspeare, presented to him by a gentleman of Dublin. The margin of this book was filled with critical notes by Wesley's own hand. Yet Mr. Pawson, regarding this book as among the things which tended not to edification, de-

stroyed it. Fortunately, Mr. Moore at Bristol heard of the progressive destruction of the papers, and instantly wrote, protesting against such conduct, and demanding them, as Wesley's trustee,—a course which saved the remainder.

Results of the agitation.

The ordinary operations of Methodism, at this time, were in most of the larger Societies more or less embarrassed by the prevalent agitation. The Society in Nottingham was much distracted, and great fears were entertained respecting it; but the issue, although resulting in the loss of half the Society, was more favourable than had been anticipated. Halifax suffered severely. Mr. Kilham was allowed to preach there in the Methodist chapel soon after his expulsion, and also at Greetland chapel. Early in 1797, a committee of local preachers, stewards, trustees, and leaders, was called for the purpose of expressing in an address their views on the current topics of the day. This was written, and published in Kilham's "Methodist Monitor." Mr. Thom was superintendent here from 1796 to 1797, when he seceded and joined Mr. Kilham, and became the pastor of the New Connexion Society at Halifax. The appointment of Mr. Thomas Taylor to be the superintendent, in 1797, did much to counteract the effect of this influence. He had twenty years before travelled in the Circuit, and greatly assisted them in building their chapel; many were therefore ashamed to turn their backs on their old friend. The country parts of this Circuit suffered greatly, and especially Illingworth and Bradshaw. The political disquiet of the times had led to the formation of a reading club and debating society, in which the works of Paine and kindred writers were read, and made the subjects of conversation. Strange as it may appear, some members of the Methodist congregations, and even of the

Society, frequented these meetings. In a kindred spirit, when Mr. Kilham's writings were issued, they were taken to the Methodist Class, and, as soon as the regular meeting was concluded, were read, and not unfrequently became the subject of angry discussion for an hour. The result was just what might have been expected. The major part of the Society at Bradshaw determined to eject their lawfully appointed minister from the chapel. To make this more significant, the day selected for the outrage was the one when Mr. Taylor was himself appointed to preach there; although he was the man who had been mainly instrumental in placing the chapel in comfortable circumstances, and had travelled scores of miles over the hills for that purpose. When Mr. Taylor reached the place, the chapel-keeper, who usually took charge of his horse, refused to touch the animal. Mr. Taylor, having dispensed with his services, proceeded to the chapel. At the door one of the ringleaders endeavoured to prevent his entering, but failed: the preacher went in, but found the pulpit occupied by a man to whom he had given his note of admission to the Society, and whose spiritual interests he had fostered and watched over in the Lord. The pulpit stairs were filled with men who rudely repulsed the aged minister; while the congregation, forgetting the respect due to a place of worship, shouted, "Turn him out." The venerable preacher, seeing it in vain to persist, turned, with tears in his eyes, and left the chapel, followed by hissing and hooting on every side. A few of his congregation, who had sense and feeling enough to be disgusted with such an outrage, followed him to a barn, which was offered as a place to worship in. Here, on opening the Bible, his eye rested on the words, "The Lord will provide;" and on this passage, as a text appointed by Heaven, he preached. In the course

of his sermon he was so blessed, that, forgetting all the injury and indignity he had suffered, full of grateful love, he said, "Bless the Lord! I remember the time when at Bradshaw we had no place to preach in, the heavens alone were our canopy; but now a good barn is afforded us in which to assemble." The chapel was not only thus unrighteously wrested from its owners, but retained; and with it most of the Society. Only one leader, James Smith, one influential member, David Clayton, and thirteen private members remained, to begin anew the Methodist cause at Bradshaw.

At Huddersfield, also, the trustees closed the chapel against their own preachers, and received Mr. Kilham, Mr. Thom, and their helpers; and a large part of the Society seceded. Leeds was also much agitated by those fierce contentions, and for a while serious consequences were apprehended; but the temperate and judicious conduct of Mr. Benson, in the early part of the year, prevented any great defection. Sheffield, Manchester, Liverpool, and indeed the Societies generally, were more or less affected by this fatal strife; so that the formation of the New Connexion, which, as we have said, might in itself have been right and proper, became, through the agitating and divisive influences which it disseminated, the means of incalculable mischief. The temptations to agitation and division were, indeed, sometimes repelled by men who were prepared to sacrifice the gains of business or the society of friends, rather than minister to the distraction and division of the church. Such was the case when two of the ministers who had seceded waited on Mr. Joseph Gee, of Hull, to induce him to join their party. He stopped them short, saying, "I know your errand; you design to divide the Lord's heritage; and I for one dare not bid you God speed, or

give you the right hand of fellowship. On the contrary, my prayer is, that He would turn your counsel into foolishness." *

Yet, notwithstanding all these difficulties and oppositions, Methodism was neither destroyed nor diminished. Assailed by former friends, opposed by open foes, yet firmly bearing up, it continued to expand and increase. A curious instance that occurred during this year is on record,—one which, although it seems at first sight to afford evidence of mental aberration, can scarcely be regarded in any other aspect than as an illustration of the intense enmity of the carnal mind to the way of righteousness and the people of God. A poor and pious man, a native of Prescot in Lancashire, was engaged at his work at the mouth of a coal-pit near Oriel in the same county, when by an incautious step he fell to the bottom of the pit, which was sixty-two yards deep. Yet, so wonderfully did the providence of God preserve him, that, although falling such a great depth, he sustained no injury whatever. Still, the most strange part of the story is, that his master, on being informed of the circumstance, instantly discharged the poor man from his employ, assigning as the reason that "the man had purposely fallen into the pit, in order that the Methodists might have something to clamour and preach about!"

Progress of the work at Southampton.

The gradual progress of the work of God at Southampton encouraged the Society in that town to erect a chapel. Hitherto, they had worshipped in their hired room; but they now proceeded to secure a building of their own expressly for the purpose. It must have been a small and humble edifice; for we are told the contract was taken by Messrs. Roe and Bartlett, builders, to purchase the ground and build a chapel and dwelling-house for the sum

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1836, p. 495.

of 316 guineas. Yet this, at that time, was regarded as a sufficient establishment to justify a division of the Portsmouth Circuit, which made Southampton the head of the new one, and a Circuit town.

Remarkable illustration of spiritual religion.

In the prosecution of a work like this, it is not very difficult to collect and arrange prominent facts and remarkable events; and these must necessarily form the substance of the history, as embodying the visible substantial materials of the work. But it is equally necessary to keep under the distinct notice of the reader illustrations of the nature and power of that inward and spiritual life from which, as a potent cause, all this outward progress, increase, and development proceed. We have something of this kind occurring this year, in the life of Mr. Thomas Tatham, of Nottingham. This distinguished Christian was converted to God in 1782, and joined the Methodist Society. He became a leader and local preacher, maintained his piety, and was, at the time referred to, convinced of the necessity of a deeper work of grace, and struggling after it. In October, 1797, he was in the quarterly love-feast, engaged in handing round the cake, when an old woman out of Derbyshire arose and said, "The Lord have mercy upon you; for you are the deadest souls I ever met in all my life! God be merciful unto you!" Mr. Tatham, on hearing this censure, was offended, and said within himself, "Who made thee to be a judge over us?" Just then a soldier in complete uniform came into the room, and in about ten minutes stood up and spoke with considerable power. When he began, it was suggested to Mr. Tatham's mind that he was prompted to speak through ostentation. But no sooner had he uttered a few sentences, than Mr. Tatham felt their unction; and he says, "His word thrilled through the congregation like an

electric shock; and I felt it to penetrate my sinful heart in a wonderful manner." In the evening, Mr. Tatham attended a prayer-meeting, and was glad to meet the soldier there. Upon being invited, he gave out a hymn, delivered a short exhortation, and then prayed with much hallowed pathos and energy. This soldier was trumpet-major in the Third Regiment of Dragoon Guards: his exemplary behaviour had so won the regard of the officers, that they allowed him every reasonable opportunity to meet with his Christian friends. The next Sunday he began to meet Mr. Tatham's Class, but had to leave to attend to some duty before he had finished. Mr. Tatham says of that occasion, "His word was like fire. It penetrated every heart, and tears ran down almost every face. He left me to finish the Class, which I knew no more how to do than if I had never met one in my life. Under a deep conviction of my want of grace, I stood confounded before the people, and ready to fall on the ground, and frankly confessed my unfaithfulness and inability to lead them. I had scarcely made this acknowledgment before the Lord visited me in mercy, and I felt such an overwhelming sense of His love as enabled me to speak with the same power the soldier had done, and with the same effect." The next morning, at family worship, Mr. Tatham read the second chapter of Acts; and while thus engaged, he says, "I felt through the agency of the same Spirit an extraordinary work wrought upon my own heart, which so overpowered me, that it was with the utmost difficulty I got through the chapter. On approaching the Lord by prayer,

> 'My tongue broke out in unknown strains,
> And sung surprising grace.'

For, such thanksgiving, accompanied with agonizing inter-

cession for others, was I led to utter, as filled all around with astonishment."

Mr. Tatham remained exceedingly happy all the day, and in the evening had it deeply impressed on his mind to speak of his altered state of feeling to the leaders on the following night, and to exhort them to a closer walk with God. When the time arrived, although he had felt unspeakably happy under the sermon, he had no sooner entered on the business of the Leaders' Meeting than his comfort was withdrawn, and he was enveloped in such a cloud of darkness as no language can describe. In this state of feeling, it was strongly suggested to his mind not to carry out his purpose of speaking that evening. Again, he thought, as he had mentioned his design to one of the leaders, he ought to do so. Just then two of the members of the meeting took up their hats to leave, when he requested them to stay, which seemed to give one of them offence. But having finished his books, as steward, he arose, and commenced telling what God had done for him; and he had no sooner begun to speak, than the presence and power of God filled his soul. He went on to mention their deficiency as leaders of the people, and continued urging deeper spirituality of experience, and firmer fidelity to the work of God. His brother steward, Mr. Joseph Woodhouse, followed, but could not proceed with his experience, owing to his bursting into a flood of tears. We give the further account in Mr. Tatham's own words: "I then exhorted every one who felt hungering and thirsting after God to engage in prayer. Mr. Bardsley prayed first; and, as he concluded, the Spirit of the Most High came upon me in such a manner as it is impossible to express. I saw and felt it as evidently, in a spiritual sense, as ever I saw the heavens open, and lightning fall upon the earth. Under

this visitation I was humbled as in the dust, emptied of self, and so filled with God, that I fell into an agony of prayer; and although, heretofore, I had ever been an avowed enemy to loud praying,—so much so, that only on the Sunday morning but one before this, on my way to the prayer-meeting at seven in the morning, when in Woolpack Lane I heard a brother praying very loud, I was so disgusted at him that I could scarce bear it. But O how ignorant was I of the operations of the Holy Spirit! God indeed showed me so that morning. For now I was so far carried out of myself by the power of God in agonizing prayer, for twenty minutes, that I could not restrain my voice, but prayed so loud that, had I been in the open air, I believe I might have been heard to the distance of half a mile.

"There were eleven leaders present who were melted down into tears. They sobbed and cried like children. After I had done, they broke out in such a general confession of sins, as would have melted a heart of stone to hear them; and continued in the deepest humiliation of soul, confessing and bewailing their sins, sometimes three or four together, and sometimes nearly all, until eleven o'clock. Such a breaking down, and such a rising up, we never before witnessed. On rising from our knees, every countenance beamed with joy, every tongue broke forth in praise, and every heart was so filled with the love of Christ, that we were ready to embrace each other. Brother Woodward rejoiced and praised God that I had prevented him from going out, and was so happy all the next day that he could not attend to business. With regard to myself, the Spirit of God rested so powerfully upon me, and my strength was thereby so greatly exhausted, that I was obliged to be supported by two friends on my way home."* The effects pro-

* DUNN'S "Memoirs of Tatham," p. 70.

duced by this spiritual baptism of Mr. Tatham and the other leaders on the Society at Nottingham, were of the happiest description. The work of God prospered, until the Society was rent in twain by the prevalent agitation, and rather more than half their number joined the New Connexion.

Fearful consequences of the rebellion in Ireland.

In Ireland the Methodists were at this time exposed to imminent peril, and especially the preachers. Toward the close of 1797, and throughout all the early part of 1798, almost the whole of that country was the scene of continued political excitement, violence, and bloodshed. The following is an extract of a letter written about this time by a Methodist supernumerary preacher, which gives a fair description of the state of the country generally: "We never saw a time in which it was more necessary to live in God than at the present. Most of the other sect are thirsting for their neighbours' blood. This thirst is wonderfully increasing and spreading through all parties, insomuch that it is hard remaining still in any posture but on our knees. There is not a night that we are not in apprehension of being attacked by murderers. The Protestants on my ground assemble in my house every night for protection; and God has hitherto preserved us, though we are the only little body in the country who have not arranged themselves in any military corps, being determined to trust God with our souls and bodies, believing that Jesus will save to the uttermost all who come to the Father through Him. It is a time of trial, but it is a time of great support to faithful souls; for we find grace equal to our day: and if we are not full of God, the fault is our own; for Heaven is on our side. Our little company is like the Israelites in the wilderness, surrounded by warlike and inimical nations; yet we are perfectly safe, and rest in peace. Pray for us, that we may hold out to the end, without sullying our garments with

the filth of distrust or ungodly fear. I had a very happy tour of four months. The church of God I found rather in a fixed mourning state than otherwise, save in Sligo and Belfast, where the work of God is sweetly progressive."

Dr. Coke, and his relation to America.

At the Conference of 1797 it was whispered about, that Dr. Coke intended leaving England and taking up his permanent residence in America. The report produced a great impression upon the preachers. They saw in him the spirit of missionary enterprise, combined with a perfect knowledge of the details of the work, together with a quenchless zeal which was altogether marvellous. They clearly perceived that the Methodism of England needed such a man, and ought to retain him. They therefore entreated the doctor to relinquish his purpose, and not to abandon them. This request was urged with so many proofs of their respect and affection, that he consented to endeavour to negotiate with the American Conference for an honourable release from the engagement which had been made. With this object in view he again went to America, taking with him an Address from the English Conference, requesting the American to cancel the obligation under which Dr. Coke had placed himself. As the General American Conference did not meet this year, no formal release could be given to the doctor; but Mr. Asbury, who presided at the Conference in Virginia, undertook to consent to his retiring from America for a season. And the General Conference, when it did assemble, confirmed this, but still held Dr. Coke to his engagement; so that, in case urgent circumstances required it, they retained the power to call on him to reside among them, and held him bound to comply.

The Conference of 1798.

The Conference of 1798 assembled at Bristol, when Mr. Benson was appointed president, and Mr. Samuel Bradburn

secretary. The list of Circuits had increased from 145 to 149: Higham Ferrers, Jersey, Inverness, and Longford, having ceased to be numbered as Circuits; while Wetherby, Howden, Berwick, Ayr, Longford, Boyle, Southampton, and Kettering are found in the list. The members under the care of the Conference in the British Islands were, 101,682, showing an increase of 2,163; and in British America and the West Indies, 11,986, being an increase of 3,244. Ireland contributed nothing this year toward the general increase, but, on the contrary, showed a decrease of 347. The cause of this is thus pathetically set forth in the Address sent from the Irish to the English Conference, dated, "Dublin, July 20th, 1798:"—"Though the troubles of our nation, when we last addressed you, were sufficiently alarming, they were only the beginning of sorrows. Never did we expect to see so awful a day as we now behold! The scenes of carnage and desolation which open to our view in every part of the land, are truly affecting; and, while we drop the tear of commiseration over our unhappy country, and our deluded countrymen in arms against the best of sovereigns and the happiest constitution in the world, we cannot help crying, 'O God, shorten the day of our calamity, or no flesh can be saved!'

Pathetic Address of the Irish Conference.

"To attempt a description of our deplorable state would be vain indeed. Suffice it to say, that loss of trade, breach of confidence, fear of assassination, towns burned, countries laid waste, houses for miles without an inhabitant, and the air tainted with the stench of thousands of carcasses already cut off, form some outline of the melancholy picture of our times. However, in the midst of this national confusion, we, and our people in general, blessed be God, have been wonderfully preserved: though some of us were imprisoned for weeks by the rebels, exposed also to fire and sword in

the heat of battle, and carried (surrounded by hundreds of pikes) into the enemies' camp, and plundered of almost every valuable, yet we have not suffered the least injury in our persons! And moreover, God, even our own God, has brought us through all, to see and embrace each other in this favoured city.....Our Conference was not only held without molestation, but by permission of his excellency the lord lieutenant. Under God we owe this permission to the exertions of our worthy president, Dr. Coke, who, upon hearing of our danger and distress, flew on the wings of love, from your land of safety and happiness, to partake of our sufferings, and to help us on our way to heaven. We feel ourselves highly obliged to him, and our hearts are knit to him in love.....But while we bless God for our preservation, we have to lament that on the Carlow and Wicklow Circuits, and several others, many Societies have been scattered, and many of our people left without a place to lay their heads. This may, in some measure, account for the diminution of numbers this year; yet we bless God that in other parts of the kingdom there has been an ingathering of souls, as well as a deepening of His work in the hearts of His people." * To this address the English Conference returned a very able, touching, and eloquent reply.

Dr. Coke's project for having some preachers episcopally ordained.

Although the Methodist Conference had decided on pursuing the course which had been providentially opened before them, and regarded their polity as established, Dr. Coke, who had fully agreed as to all the concessions which had been made, was not satisfied with their operation in respect of the sacrament. The case, as regarded by him, was just this: If nothing could be done to afford the members of the Methodist Societies the administration of

* Minutes, vol. i., p. 412.

the sacraments by religious men in connexion with the Church of England, he fully believed their own preachers should administer them; but he saw, from the rapid progress of this practice, that it would issue at no distant time in alienating the Methodists altogether from the services of the Church,—a result which he greatly deprecated. Pressed by these considerations, he laboured to sketch some plan for meeting the case. The solution which appeared to him most likely to succeed, was to have a given number of the preachers proposed by the Conference episcopally ordained, with liberty for them to travel through the Connexion, for the purpose of administering the sacrament to the Societies. Having come to this conclusion, he submitted the subject to the attorney-general, whom he had known at Oxford, and who approved of it. The doctor then formally submitted the project to the bishop of London. In his letter he informed this prelate that "a very considerable part of our Society have imbibed a deep prejudice against receiving the Lord's supper from the hands of immoral clergymen;" and observed that "the word 'immoral' they consider in a very extensive sense, as including all those who frequent the card-tables, balls, horse-racing, theatres, and other places of fashionable amusement." Having shown the importance of the case, that the Methodist Societies contained about ninety thousand adults in close connexion, and that the regular hearers amounted to about half a million, he suggested the measure above named to his lordship's consideration.

In about a week afterward, Dr. Coke received a note from the bishop, acknowledging the receipt of the letter, and admitting the importance of the subject, but expressing a doubt whether the proposed means were practicable. The bishop, however, promised to bring the subject under the notice of the two archbishops, and to inform Dr. Coke

as soon as anything had been decided on. Between a fortnight and three weeks afterward, the doctor received a letter from the archbishop of Canterbury, stating that the subject had been fully considered, and been found to be impracticable. After expressing himself willing to meet the case of persons of tender consciences with every possible indulgence, he goes on to say, "But that a scruple avowed to be founded on the presumption that all the regularly ordained clergy of the Church of England are immoral, should be given way to, and that the bishops should, on such a suggestion, ordain a number of persons upon the recommendation of your general Conference, without any other inquiry as to their fitness, and without any title or appointment to any place where they might legally exercise their functions; such a proposal, merely for the purpose of supplying congregations which scruple to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at the hands of our ministers, whom they deem unworthy, with pastors whom they more approve, we must think it highly unjustifiable in us to comply with." * Thus terminated this effort to unite Methodism more closely with the Church. In dismissing it we may observe, that the Conference had nothing whatever to do with this project; of which, indeed, it was entirely ignorant. The measure was Dr. Coke's own, undertaken on his individual responsibility. If he had succeeded with the bishops, he would have had to bring it before the Conference; but having failed with the episcopal bench, the whole case was at an end.

Its failure.

The missionaries in British America and Newfoundland remained eight in number, as in the preceding year. But those employed in the West India Islands were increased to twenty-two, being an addition of eight. The Stations

* DREW'S "Life of Dr. Coke," p. 293.

were also increased; Dominica, St. Bartholomew, Montego Bay, Providence Island, and Bermuda, having then received missionaries.

Shipwreck and sufferings of W. Jenkins.

One of these newly appointed men was William Jenkins, who underwent remarkable dangers in attempting to reach the place to which he was appointed. This young man, who was a native of St. Kevern, in Cornwall, was converted to God, and led to offer himself for the Mission work, under rather remarkable circumstances. He embarked for his destination at Bristol, in a vessel bound for the West Indies, but which had to touch at Cork. In her way, she encountered a dreadful storm, which rendered the vessel unmanageable, and drove her on shore, a perfect wreck, on the coast of Ireland, near Kinsale. As soon as the receding of the tide made it possible, the rude and savage peasantry rushed on board, and began to plunder the vessel and the passengers of everything they could lay their hands on. Mr. Jenkins and his companions got on shore, but were afterwards for a while exposed to great danger from the violence of the people, until a body of military appeared, to protect them and the property in the wreck. The mob was, however, so furious, that it was not until four of them had been shot that they were dispersed. The case of Mr. Jenkins was most deplorable, having lost all his property, and retaining scarcely a comfortable suit of clothes to wear. The accommodation which he had obtained in a house near the wreck being wretched, he went to Kinsale, where he was most hospitably entertained by an innkeeper and his wife. Finding they were Roman Catholics, and thinking they might regard him as one of their communion, he frankly told the mistress that he was a Protestant and a Methodist, and that he had no money or other means of making her any remuneration for what he might receive.

Her answer was truly generous and noble: "You are a Christian and in distress; therefore whatever I have in my house is at your service; and the only recompense I expect from you is to see that you are comfortable while under my roof." She then urged him to call on a kinsman of hers, a Popish priest, who lived some distance off, near the place where the wreck took place, and who, she thought, might have sufficient influence with the people to induce them to return some of the property belonging to Mr. Jenkins, which had been stolen from the wreck, as there was no doubt but that many of them were concerned in the outrage. Mr. Jenkins went: the priest received him kindly, and promised to do his utmost on his behalf, but said, "I fear they will pay little attention to my exhortation: I will try, and you can call again, and I will inform you of the result." When Mr. Jenkins called again, the priest told him he had not succeeded, but that he would make further efforts. Mr. Jenkins told him of his being a Protestant; but that had no effect on the kindness of the priest, who said, "You see my situation; it is far from being an elegant one. I have begun to build this house, but have not yet wherewithal to finish it, but hope to do it next year; a part of it is fitted for my habitation; and I request you to come and live with me, and we will have all things in common, as the disciples of Christ had shortly after the day of Pentecost. It is true, you and I differ in judgment touching some particular points of doctrine and forms of worship; but we both agree in the most important matters; we both serve the same Master, aim at His glory, and are labouring to save souls from ruin. You are therefore my brother in Christ, and, as such, are entitled to an equal share of all I possess." * We do not wish in any manner to insinuate that such instances

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1819, p. 928.

of catholic Christian feeling, and noble elevation of character, above all merely sectarian partiality and prejudice, are of rare occurrence among Papists; although they evidently exhibit a Christianity decidedly in advance of the doctrines maintained by that church. But that an instance should be found in Ireland, just at the time of the rebellion, when tens of thousands of their co-religionists had conducted a furious and merciless war against Protant ascendancy and the professors of the Protestant faith, is a cheering and refreshing fact, on which the mind delights to dwell. With such exhibitions of Christianity before us, how mean and empty the circumstantials of religion appear in comparison of the "faith which worketh by love!" Mr. Jenkins had written to Dr. Coke as soon after his shipwreck as any opportunity offered; and shortly afterwards the doctor sent him a consolatory letter, enclosing a draft for £200, to enable him to pursue his voyage without further delay. The amount thus sent affords another proof of the generous character of Dr. Coke's mind. No man ever toiled more than he had done to secure funds for the prosecution of the Missions to the West Indies. He had begged from door to door through evil report and good report, had given his own money, and borrowed, and used every other legitimate means to secure his object. And now rather than a missionary should be delayed unnecessarily on his way, or suffer inconvenience beyond what was absolutely unavoidable, two hundred pounds were sent to Mr. Jenkins, who was thereby enabled to pay for all the food and accommodation which he had received at Kinsale, to take his passage in a vessel from Cork, and thus to reach his destination at St. Christopher's, where he arrived safely, and was joyfully received.*

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1819, p. 929.

The Preachers' Fund improved.

Mr. Henry Moore and Mr. Adam Clarke, then labouring together in Bristol, devised an improvement, amounting indeed to an entire re-modelling, of the Preachers' Fund. This fund had been in operation many years. The terms first proposed were very simple, and each preacher contributed one guinea *per annum;* and, when unable any longer to discharge the duties of the ministry, received one guinea *per* year for every year he had travelled. So that, if a preacher's health failed when he had travelled only twelve or fifteen years, he would only receive twelve or fifteen guineas a year, as the case might be. Mr. Clarke, being fully aware that such a sum made no adequate provision for a preacher, exerted himself to devise a plan which would at least approximate to a competent provision. In conjunction with Mr. Moore this was done. The terms were propounded in a meeting of the preachers and people, Mr. Moore presiding: when the scheme was arranged, it was subsequently submitted to the Conference, and approved. The new plan was this: "That every member of this Society, who is considered as superannuated by the Conference, shall, if he has travelled under the direction of the Conference less than twenty years, receive annually twenty-four guineas. If he has travelled twenty years, and less than twenty-five years, he shall receive thirty guineas. If he has so travelled twenty-five years, and less than thirty years, thirty-five guineas. If he has so travelled thirty and less than thirty-five years, he shall receive annually forty guineas. If he has so travelled thirty-five years or upwards, he shall receive forty-five guineas. The payments to commence from the time the preacher is superannuated, and to be made every six months." At the same time it was arranged, that every new member entering this Society should pay an entrance-fee of ten guineas, and make an

annual payment of three guineas. By these means some effectual improvement was attempted, although the result did not equal the benevolent hopes of its projectors.

Peculiar adaptation of Methodism for employing all kinds of talent.

In tracing the progress of Methodism from year to year, the mind becomes more than ever impressed with the vast advantage which the Connexion derived from the practice of providing for the godly exercise of every description of talent. When we pass our eye over the list of agency employed in the church in apostolic times, it cannot be doubted that this great diversity of gifts was munificently given, and very graciously adapted, to promote the spiritual interests of the church, and advance and extend the kingdom of the Redeemer. It has certainly been so in Methodism. Men have been raised up with abilities of such a peculiar kind, that, placed within the strict limits of any ordinary office, or under any rigid rules, they would be so fettered and cramped as to be almost useless; or, if not quite so, at least not at all as useful as when enabled to give their energies full scope for exertion. In Methodism this has often been done without resulting in anything deserving the name of disorder. Dr. Coke was a striking instance of this kind. Fixed in a church, or confined to the usual work of a Circuit preacher, he might have been a good and useful man; but in either of these positions he could not have contributed a tithe of the impetus to the godly action of the cause of God which he rendered when employed as he was in Methodism.

Dr. Coke.

Samuel Hick.

Two other men, very different in almost every respect from each other, were this year found rising up into usefulness in different parts of the Methodist body. The first of these was Samuel Hick, a village blacksmith of Yorkshire, a man with no learning except the mere art of reading, and with scarcely any ability beyond a limited measure of common

sense, united with some wit, much eccentricity, and great energy. This man, however, speaking in the broad but abbreviated Yorkshire dialect, so as scarcely to be understood in another district, was made very useful in leading sinners to the experience of salvation, and in strengthening the hands of believers. He had, indeed, one qualification which must not be overlooked,—he was eminently holy. Though destitute of learning, his whole body was full of light; for his eye was single. It is hardly possible to estimate the fruits of this man's labours and prayers. Although scarcely any denomination but Methodism would have recognised such a man as a local preacher, there are few of that class of labourers, however talented or successful, who can approach him in usefulness.

Nor was his usefulness, notwithstanding his humble abilities, confined to those of his own rank in life: gentlemen, country squires, members of Parliament, even peers of the realm, often heard from his lips the truth of God, delivered in a manner which, from the holy unction with which it was charged, roused in their minds serious thoughts of God and religion; and not unfrequently so as at once to convey instruction, and awaken real respect for the truth and its zealous teacher.

Gideon Ouseley.

The other person referred to moved in a very different sphere, and was in every respect a superior man. Gideon Ouseley was the eldest son of a gentleman of Dunmore, in the county of Galway, and brother to Major-General Sir Ralph Ouseley, whose name is identified with English history, as having run a brilliant military career. Mr. Gideon Ouseley, being the eldest son, was not intended for any profession. He received a superior mathematical and classical education, with his two cousins, Sir William and Sir Gore Ouseley, celebrated for their oriental

learning; and is described, even in his youth, as an energetic, hard-working scholar. When about twenty-six or twenty-seven, he was much affected with serious thoughts of religion. Soon afterwards the Methodist preachers began to visit Dunmore. By their ministrations he became more deeply serious. In 1791, about two years afterward, he attended a Class-meeting, and was brought under a deep and agonizing sense of his sin and danger, and soon after found peace and pardon through the great atonement. His piety afterward became truly eminent, and his zeal for God intense. He was called by the Spirit of God to preach the Gospel, and was very useful in calling sinners to repentance in his own neighbourhood. At the close of the Methodistic year now under review, we find him preparing to devote himself fully to the Methodist ministry, for the purpose of carrying the Gospel to the most dark and depraved of his countrymen.

It may be said that Mr. Ouseley would have made a highly respectable minister in any evangelical church; and such is undoubtedly the fact. But in no single parish, to no individual congregation, could he have ministered the amount of good, which he instrumentally dispensed as a Methodist missionary to the native Irish. Nor was there any other body with which he could have connected himself, that could have co-operated with him in his exertions as effectually, and have husbanded and trained up the fruits of his labours as fully, as was done by the Methodist agency with which he was associated. To his eminently useful career we shall frequently have to refer in the following pages.

Revivals in Cornwall and Ireland.

In the spring of 1799, there was a very gracious spiritual influence poured on most of the Societies in the west of Cornwall. At Penzance, Zennor, Hayle, St. Just, and other

places, great numbers were turned "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God."

In Bandon, Ireland, there was also about the same time a revival of religion. It was computed that in that neighbourhood, within the space of about twelve days, not less than two hundred and fifty persons were converted to God: so that, while all the glory was ascribed to the Lord, the people sang, "The wilderness is become as a fruitful field."

The Rev. David Simpson, an eminently pious and useful clergyman, died March 24th, 1799. He had for twenty-six years laboured in the ministry in the town of Macclesfield, and had been instrumental in the conversion of great numbers of the inhabitants. His preaching was remarkably effective, and the various works which he published were designed to promote the spread of useful knowledge and true religion. Himself earnestly devoted to the promotion of evangelical godliness, he rejoiced in the success of all who aimed at the same object. He was accordingly on the most friendly terms with the Methodists. Wesley frequently preached in his church, and the Methodist people held him in the highest esteem. He was indeed, as a clergyman of the Church of England, a burning and a shining light.

The Conference of 1799.

The Conference of 1799 was held in Manchester, and began July 29th. Mr. Samuel Bradburn was president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The report of preachers who had died in the preceding year, and of those now admitted, merits notice. In the first of these, we find the name of William Thompson, who first filled the presidential chair after the death of Wesley. He laboured as a preacher above forty years, and died happy in God. John Murlin, commonly called "the weeping prophet," on account of his frequently shedding tears in the pulpit, was also taken away.

He had retired from active labour about two years, after having travelled thirty-three years. His death was triumphant. Thomas Olivers, whose name frequently occurs in our first volume in connexion with Wesley, died this year. In his early years he was a zealous, able, and useful preacher, but was employed by Wesley, during a large part of his life, as corrector of the press. He was a man of considerable talents and independence of mind, a poet and musical composer of no minor order, a keen logical controversialist, and thoroughly attached to Methodism.

The list of preachers admitted on trial contains two names of the highest Methodistic celebrity,—Jabez Bunting, Robert Newton. As the first of these honoured men is still with us, we will only say that as a Methodist minister he has held a more eminent and more honourable position in the history of the Connexion than any other individual since the death of its founder. Robert Newton, full of years and honours, has passed to his reward,—a man who, whether regarded in respect of the extent of his journeyings, the number of sermons he preached, the amount of money he collected for the support of religious institutions, or the wide range of influence which he exerted from the pulpit and the platform, is without an equal in the more recent history of the Christian church.

Its transactions.

The number of Circuits in the British islands at the close of the Conference was 156, being an increase of seven. The following were the changes:—Wigan, Spalding, Youghal, ceased to rank as Circuits; and Dover, Framlingham, Truro, Helston, Welshpool, Preston, Todmorden, Louth, Drogheda, and Skibbereen, became Circuits. In these Minutes we find for the first time the appointment of missionaries for Ireland: they were, James M'Quigg, Charles Graham, and Gideon Ouseley. The Missions in

British America had the same number of ministers employed as last year. In the West Indies there was an increase of one man. The number of members in Society reported to this Conference was in the British Islands 107,969, being an increase of 6,287; in British America and the West India Islands, 12,780, an increase of 794; and in Gibraltar, 50. At this Conference it was thought proper to make a minute respecting these Missions. Dr. Coke had hitherto exerted himself largely on their behalf, had raised so considerable a portion of the funds for their support, and had directed the appointments for their supply, and their general operations, to such an extent, that it required some special declaration to place the strict and true relation of the several parties distinctly before the world. These Missions had also now become so important and extensive as to require increased and permanent funds for their support; which formed another reason why their position, and that of all parties concerned, should be clearly defined. This was done by the following minute:—"*Q.* Are there any further directions or regulations in respect to the West India Missions? *A.* 1. We, in the fullest manner, take these Missions under our own care, and consider Dr. Coke as our agent. 2. We agree, that a collection shall be made as soon as possible in all our Sunday congregations in Great Britain for that blessed work. 3. We desire Dr. Coke to draw up a statement of the work of God in the West Indies, with a short address to the people; and to send printed copies of it to all the superintendents." *

The Missions.

These measures were designed and adapted to commend the cause of Missions more deeply to the sympathies of the Methodist people, and to afford them the means of import-

* Minutes, vol. ii., p. 27.

ant information respecting the progress of this great and good work.

The Preachers' Fund.

The recommendations already mentioned of Messrs. Henry Moore and Adam Clarke, respecting the Preachers' Fund, were considered and approved at this Conference. This fund was first formed in 1763: the urgent need of preachers, when unable, from age or affliction, to continue longer in the work, rendered a measure of this kind absolutely necessary at a very early period of Methodist history. Its original institution was very simple. Each preacher was required to contribute ten shillings *per annum*, to be paid at the Conference: this money was lodged in the hands of three stewards, approved by the majority of the Conference: out of it what was necessary was allowed yearly, first, to old and sickly preachers; secondly, for the widows and children of those who were dead. The regulations of this fund were further modified in 1765. The subscription was then made half a guinea, with an entrance fee of a guinea. The capital was not to be reduced below one hundred pounds. Every superannuated preacher was to have at least ten pounds a year: every widow of such preacher, once for all, forty pounds: every child left by such preacher, once for all, ten pounds; but not when the mother had received the forty. No preacher was entitled to receive until he had subscribed two guineas, nor any who had allowed his subscription to go four years in arrear. An excluded preacher was to have the money he had subscribed returned. From the year 1781 to 1790, in consequence of the insufficient contributions of the people, a portion of the Preachers' Fund was, contrary to the rules, appropriated to the support of the preachers: this practice was by special minute forbidden. Yet, in 1796, it was found that the fund, which should have been £6,000, was no more

than £70, the bulk having been expended in discharging the debts owing on Wesley's property, and in carrying on the work before and since his death. In 1796, the rules were again re-modelled.

As the contributions of the preachers to this fund were supplemented by subscriptions from among the people, it was in 1799 resolved, "That the subscriptions of the travelling preachers shall, in future, be considered as separate from the subscriptions of the people; and the subscriptions of the people shall be considered as forming a fund of charity, which is to be applied only to the superannuated preachers, and the widows of preachers: nevertheless, those who have hitherto received allowances from the fund, shall continue to receive them, notwithstanding this regulation, as a retrospective law would be unjust. The subscriptions of the preachers being their own money, subscribed in general with great difficulty out of their little pittance, shall be distributed among the supernumerary and superannuated preachers and widows, according to strict and impartial rules of justice." *

In several other respects this Conference exercised its administrative power with considerable effect. It took into consideration the applications of several Societies for help toward the erection of chapels. This need was generally occasioned by seceders having wrested the chapel in each of those places from the Society for whose use it was built. Collections were allowed to be made in the chapels, within certain prescribed limits, for the assistance of nine such cases.

The Book Room.

Several important arrangements were made for an improved management of the business of the Book Room. Dr. Coke, and Messrs. Storey, Moore, and Clarke, were

* Minutes, vol. ii., p. 22.

appointed a Committee "to reduce the large Hymn Book to its primitive simplicity, as published in the second edition, with liberty to add a note now and then to explain a difficult passage for the sake of the unlearned." * Measures were also taken for keeping the general accounts of the Connexion in a better manner, by the appointment of a treasurer, accountant, and secretary, for the Yearly Collection, the Kingswood School, and the Preachers' Fund, respectively. A Committee was appointed, by ballot, for considering all addresses and public letters sent to the Conference, and drawing up answers to them. It was also ordered that proper minute books should be kept for recording the business done in the respective District Meetings, and these should be handed down to the chairmen successively. Wesley's minute against formality in singing, and the use of anthems, which he had incorporated into the Large Minutes, was re-enacted at this Conference, and again published in the Minutes.

The Address of the Irish Conference to that of England is peculiarly affecting; its reference to the terrible scenes of the rebellion is most touching, and the allusion to the first attempt made in modern times at preaching the Gospel to the Irish in their own language, by means of itinerant Methodist preachers, is very appropriate. It should be placed on permanent record, that the church was mainly indebted to Dr. Coke for this noble attempt to evangelize the scattered peasantry of the sister island. He undertook the onerous task of raising money to defray the expenses connected with the maintenance of this Mission.

The reply of the English Conference also merits notice. It assents to the request made by the Irish preachers for the continued assistance of Dr. Coke, thus :—"Your request

* Minutes, vol. ii., p. 24.

concerning Dr. Coke is granted. We consent to his being our representative and your president, should the Lord spare him the ensuing year. He has for seventeen years annually visited our friends in different parts of Ireland, and we have no objection to his continuing this labour of love, which he has undertaken for Christ's sake, and at the desire of his brethren. His service to you in these critical times, under Divine Providence, is cause of rejoicing to us, and we trust he will still be enabled to serve you in the same way." The last sentence of this letter shows the brotherly feeling with which the English preachers regarded them in their troubles. It says:—"We have made up all your deficiencies, though we have been obliged to borrow one thousand pounds to make up our own."

As the General Conference of America would meet in the course of the current year, an Address was sent for presentation to that body. Its most important subject was an earnest request that Dr. Coke might be released from the obligation under which he had laid himself to reside and labour in America. The essential importance of his personal counsel, support, and supervision to the success of the Missions in the West Indies, and to the newly formed Mission to the native Irish, is made the principal reason for urging this request.

The proceedings of the Conference of 1799 closed with an Address to the Societies throughout the Connexion. The state of the funds, published with the Minutes for the year, showed a deficiency of nineteen hundred pounds as the aggregate of the debt which had accrued in the last few years. An earnest appeal was now made for a measure of liberality commensurate with the rapid increase and great extent of the work of God.

It seems that, during the sittings of this Conference,

the first public announcement was made of any part of Mr. Adam Clarke's Commentary. The following is copied from a printed paper which was sent to Mrs. Clarke with a letter containing Conference intelligence on the fly-leaf. This letter bears date "August 8th, 1799;" so that there can be no doubt that Mr. Clarke had prepared this circular for being printed the day on which it is dated; and when, six or seven days later, he had it returned from the printer, he sent a copy with a letter to his wife.

"*August* 1*st*, 1799.

"In great forwardness for the Press, (and to be published with all convenient speed,) a faithful and (as nearly as possible) literal Translation of the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, taken from Professor Griesbach's very accurate Edition, and collated with most of the ancient and modern Versions. With a Commentary, in which all the principal Words in the original Text are analysed and explained; the most important Readings of the best MSS. noticed; the peculiar Customs of the Jews and neighbouring Nations, alluded to by our Lord and the Apostles, explained from Asiatic Writings, several of which have never been published in Europe; the great Doctrines of the Gospel of God defined, illustrated, and defended; and the whole applied to the important Purposes of sound practical Christianity and vital Godliness.

"By Adam Clarke.

"N.B.—In this work the common version is intended to be printed in a parallel column with the new translation, that those who prefer the former may have the opportunity of applying the Commentary to it.

"The work will make two volumes in quarto."

Progress and position of the Missions.

In compliance with the request of the Conference, Dr. Coke drew up a statement of the progress and present state of the West India Missions. It set forth that "we have been engaged but thirteen years in this blessed work, and yet the Lord has graciously given us about eleven thousand souls, besides those who in that time have been safely lodged in Abraham's bosom. All of these, as far as we, who are no discerners of the heart, can judge, are truly awakened to a knowledge of their fallen state: they have forsaken their outward sins, yea, even the most favourite of all, polygamy, and are earnestly seeking salvation through the blood of the covenant; and a very considerable part of them are happy in the love of God. In the lovefeasts and band-meetings in St. John's in Antigua, Basse Terre in St. Christopher's, Kingston in St. Vincent's, Kingston in Jamaica, &c., I have been charmed with the testimony which the believing Negroes bore for Jesus Christ. One after another, with the utmost order, they gave an account, in their Negro dialect, of the work of grace upon their souls in its different stages, with as much clearness and perspicuity as any believer in Europe: and their own masters confess that they are the best and most faithful servants which they possess.

"We have now 2,800 in Society in Antigua, above 1,800 in St. Christopher's, 500 in Nevis, above 3,000 in Tortola and the other Virgin Islands, 100 in Dominica, 2,000 in St. Vincent's, 44 in Barbadoes, 130 in Grenada, near 600 in Jamaica, and 120 in St. Bartholomew's. All these we are not ashamed to call members of our Society.

"Inclusive of the above, we have between fifty and sixty thousand under instruction, of all of whom we are in hopes that we shall be able in time, through the grace of God, to

give a good account. And the Lord has been pleased to raise up about fifty preachers among the Negroes.

"We have also opened a new Mission among the Negroes in Bermuda, of which Mr. Stephenson, our missionary in that island, gives us a pleasing account. Mr. Turton, who has introduced the Gospel into St. Bartholomew's, has been appointed for Providence Island, to which we have had strong and repeated invitations. We are also establishing a mission among the French Negroes in the island of Grenada, one of our French preachers from the island of Jersey having undertaken the arduous task. In short, the success which the Lord has been pleased to give us exceeds our most sanguine expectations, and the prospects before us are of the most pleasing kind." *

Remarkable conversion.

The history of the world, if properly regarded and faithfully reported, would be found full of the gracious interpositions of the Spirit of God, issuing in their salvation, if men were obedient to the benign influence. The following well attested case, occurring this year, is one of these. A poor man, Samuel W——, abandoned to sinful practices, and long inured to a course of wickedness, had engaged himself as trumpeter to a set of strolling players. One morning a companion told him that he was greatly tempted to destroy himself. Samuel laughed at him for his weakness. However, in a few days the wretched man actually put an end to his life. Very soon after, Samuel was violently tempted to commit the same crime. He resisted; but his mind was always in a tempest; he thought Satan was continually urging him to destroy himself as his comrade had done, telling him that he had sinned beyond the hope of mercy, and that the longer he lived the greater would be his condemnation. Harassed thus for more than a year, he sought the advice

* "Methodist Magazine," 1800, p. 42.

of two clergymen and a physician, but found no relief. In this distress, he saw in a dream a minister, who said to him, "I know your troubles, and have come to show you the way to peace with God: follow me." Presently he thought he was conducted into a beautiful garden, where every thing he saw was delightful to his mind. Following his profession, a few weeks after he had this dream, he saw the Rev. Mr. Walker in the street at Truro, and instantly cried out, "That is the very man who appeared to me in my dream! I must go and tell him what my sufferings are." He did so. Mr. Walker, after showing him the sinfulness of sin, and the necessity of repentance, preached Christ unto him. The result was, that Samuel was set free from the bondage of sin and Satan: he left his former companions, got another employment, led a new life,—a life becoming a follower of Jesus Christ.

Richard Watson's first publication.

While Mr. Richard Watson, then a young man of nineteen, was pursuing his way as junior Methodist preacher in the Derby Circuit, circumstances occurred which induced him to send forth his first publication to the world. A clergyman in that town had published an "Address to the People called Methodists." The object of this publication was to alienate the public confidence from the Methodist ministry, by attempting to prove that the preachers have no legitimate authority, and that the doctrines which they teach are erroneous and enthusiastic. The writer contended that there is no regeneration besides that which is assumed to take place in baptism; that the Methodists lay claim to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit; that they deprive men of innocent pleasures and gratifications, and subject them to needless terror and alarms; that justification is a very difficult subject, concerning which there have been many clashing opinions among good

men; and that people had far better set themselves to discharge the duties of life, than give themselves anxious concern respecting the manner of their justification before God. There was nothing original or strange in this; as every one acquainted with the early history of Methodism is aware, these charges and reasonings had been urged and refuted a hundred times: yet, as this pamphlet was extensively and gratuitously circulated, and was calculated to make a very injurious impression, an antidote was deemed desirable, and Mr. Watson was requested by the friends in Derby to write an answer to it. He did so, and produced his first publication under the following title: "An Apology for the Methodists; in a Letter to the Rev. J. Hotham, B.A., Rector of St. Werburgh's, Derby; in Answer to a Pamphlet lately circulated amongst the Inhabitants of Derby, entitled, 'An Address to the People called Methodists.' By Richard Watson, Preacher of the Gospel." A writer, every way qualified to pronounce an opinion, says of this publication, that it was, of course, "vastly inferior to the elegant, argumentative, and finished works, which in subsequent years emanated from his pen; yet it is no discredit to the youth of nineteen. As the author with whom he entered the lists had indulged himself pretty freely in invective and insinuation, and had given himself no trouble to ascertain the sentiments of the people whom he assailed, Mr. Watson treats him with little ceremony, and tells him some truths which we may suppose would not be very palatable. There are passages in this concise publication of considerable power and acuteness, and which give pleasing indications of future eminence." *

During this year the three Irish missionaries entered

* JACKSON'S "Life of Richard Watson," p. 43.

Success of the Irish Mission.

upon their great work. Besides Gideon Ouseley, already mentioned, there were James M'Quigg and Charles Graham. The former of these entered on the work of the ministry in 1789: he was an eminent Irish scholar, and an able preacher. After some years his health failed under the excessive labours and sufferings to which he was exposed; but he was afterward very honourably employed by the British and Foreign Bible Society in editing their edition of the Irish Bible. Charles Graham entered the ministry in 1790. These gifted men—well instructed in the doctrines of the Gospel, and full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, longing for the salvation of souls—entered on their missionary labours with a vehemence and ardour worthy the best and purest ages of the church. Their spirit and object are strikingly exhibited by the nervous description given of them: "They knew no success but conversions, and no applause but tears." They were favoured with indubitable success. New as the project was, few in numbers as they were, God crowned their word with His blessing; and sinners the most ignorant and besotted were turned from Satan to God. So large, indeed, was this success, even in the first twelve months, that at the ensuing Conference another missionary was added to the number; so that they could then form two companies, with two missionaries in each.

Fidelity of the instructed Negroes in Tortola.

Brief as had been the operations of the Methodist Missions in the West Indies, and limited as was the number of missionaries employed, the instructions conveyed had produced a sensible effect on the Negro slaves, not only in respect of religion and morals, but also as regarded their fidelity to the government, and their general subordination. Some time after the beginning of the war with France, the acting governor of the island of Tortola received intelligence that a French squadron would soon

attack the island. Alarmed at the information, he found himself, with his very small military force, utterly defenceless, and without any resources, unless he could venture to arm the Negro slaves; and this he regarded as exceedingly dangerous. Pressed by the exigency, however, he sent for Mr. Turner, the Methodist missionary, and asked his opinion. Mr. Turner instantly declared himself prepared to vouch for the fidelity of all connected with the Methodist Society. Confiding in the missionary's judgment, and relying on the influence the religious slaves had over the others, the governor declared himself prepared to adopt the only course likely to preserve the island, if Mr. Turner would accompany them in their military services. At first he hesitated, considering it an unsuitable position for a Christian minister; but at length, seeing the importance of the case, he consented. The Negroes were accordingly armed and trained, as far as circumstances would permit; and in about a fortnight the French squadron arrived; but, on nearing the shore, they found a much more formidable show of resistance than they had expected: so that, satisfying themselves with cutting out two vessels lying at anchor in the bay, they retired without making any attempt to land. During the time the Negroes were thus employed, they conducted themselves with perfect order; and when the danger was over, on being requested to do so, they laid down their arms, and retired to their usual employments.

Its results.

This good conduct of the Negroes in Tortola had considerable effect on the governors of the neighbouring islands. Shortly afterward the governor of the Leeward Islands sent a request to the Methodist missionaries in Antigua and St. Christopher's, that they would make a return of all the Negroes in their Societies who were capable of bearing arms, as he had received satisfactory

information of their loyalty and fidelity. A list was made out; and the Negroes so returned were immediately armed and incorporated with the defenders of their respective islands. Indeed, so impressed was the government with a conviction of the salutary influence of the Methodist Missions on the safety of the West India Islands, that early in this year Dr. Coke received a letter from the secretary of the Post Office, informing him that leave was given for the passage of two Missionaries, one to Bermuda, and the other to Jamaica, in the packets from Falmouth, "without payment of the king's head money."

Dr. Coke visits America.

Dr. Coke left England on his eighth voyage across the Atlantic soon after the Conference of 1799, and spent most of the year in America. He took with him the Address previously noticed, and received a kind, but qualified, response, in which the General Conference of America, on account of his importance to the prosperity of the Irish and West India Missions, consented to "*lend*" the doctor to their English brethren "for a season," but hoped to see him again in America by the next General Conference, which would be in four years.

Daniel Isaac.

In the course of this year, Daniel Isaac, who had been previously employed about twelve months as a local preacher, was called out to supply the place of Mr. John Cricket, whose health had failed, in the Gainsborough Circuit. From the first, his preaching was peculiarly vigorous, forcible, and impressive.

George Lowe at Howden.

Mr. George Lowe spent this year in the Howden Circuit, and his labours were crowned with great and blessed results. Soon after his arrival, he went out on a week-night to preach in one of the country chapels, when, as was by no means very unusual at that time, several young men agreed to go and have some amusement with the new

preacher. Arrived at the place, in due course he proceeded with the service, and in regular order announced his text: "Now consider this, all ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." (Psalm iv. 22.) From these solemn words he enforced the magnitude of the sin, the severity of the punishment, and the wisdom of a deep and serious consideration of the subject. The young men had waited till the sermon to begin their amusement. But the text, and still more the sermon, subdued their restlessness and desire for mischief; several of them were affected unto tears, and their ringleader was deeply convinced of sin, and remained to pray. His distress was very deep, but the Lord "bound up his broken heart;" he joined the Society, was made useful, and in 1804 became an itinerant minister: this was John Lancaster, the editor of the Life of Lady Maxwell. This success was only the beginning of good days; a general revival of religion followed; the word of God seemed to be irresistible; sometimes five, and at others six, were converted under one sermon.*

Prosperity at Nottingham.

Similar blessing was poured on the Society at Nottingham. In the preceding year a new chapel had been built, instead of the one which had been wrested from the Connexion by the seceders; and in that year, under the ministry of Messrs. Bramwell, Reynolds, and Pattison, the loss by the secession, although above three hundred, was fully repaired by an equal number admitted into the Society. This year a still larger number was added.

Preachers' life in Ireland.

A preacher gives the following graphic account of his labours in Ireland at this period:—"In Mrs. Tighe's,† we conversed with senators, ministers, and ladies of rank and

* "Life of the Rev. George Lowe," p. 244.

† The accomplished author of "Psyche."

talent; we were attended by liveried servants, and cheered with the sound of the organ: perhaps in the next place our lodging was on straw, in some outhouse or newly prepared dwelling. Our labours were multiplied and incessant, and we had formidable difficulties to contend with; but they were few and light, compared with the sufferings and privations of our people, who had but recently suffered the loss of their dearest relations by murder and massacre; who had witnessed the burning of their houses, and the destruction of their property; were driven to embrace the rock for a shelter, or wander from place to place, destitute, afflicted, tormented. In attending many of our places we might say, 'Our life was in our hand.'"

Threatened persecution averted.

Yet, whilst bearing up under such adversities, and instrumentally effecting so much good, the men who prosecuted these zealous labours for the evangelization of the country, could not be allowed to pursue their way unmolested. The clergy of a district in the diocese of Lincoln published a Report violently aggressive on the Methodist body, and it was known that it was intended to follow up this by an application to Parliament for an Act to limit the liberty to preach and worship. Mr. Benson soon produced an able reply to the slanderous Report; but much anxiety was felt respecting the threatened parliamentary action, and especially when it became known that an influential member, Mr. M. Angelo Taylor, had promised to introduce the proposed Bill. Means were taken to give him information on the subject; he found he had been misled by misrepresentation, and finally resolved to abandon the measure. So nothing was done.

CHAPTER III.

FROM THE CONFERENCE OF 1800 TO THAT OF 1805.

THE Conference of 1800—Important Results of the annual Review of the Work—Transactions of the Conference—Improved Arrangements for the Missions—Embarrassed State of the Connexional Funds—Its Cause—The Friendly Union—Richard Watson, his great Talents—He leaves the Connexion—Becomes a Minister in the New Connexion—Daniel Isaac—West Indies—Persecuting Law in Jamaica—Imprisonment of the Missionary—The Law disallowed by Government—One who had slandered Wesley confesses his Sin—The Conference of 1801—Death of Mr. A. Mather—Labours and Successes of the Irish Missionaries—Spiritual Prosperity in Coleraine—Thomas Waugh—Awful Scarcity of Food, accompanied by spiritual Blessing—Dr. Coke initiates the Welsh Mission—Mr. Edward Jones, his Labours and Success—Davies and Hughes enter upon their Work—It is crowned with Success—Dr. Coke's Commentary—Religious Prosperity at Nottingham—Revival in Leeds—Origin of Daniel Isaac's Work on Universal Restoration—Adam Clarke at Liverpool—His Health fails—The Conference of 1802—Obituary: Christopher Hopper and Peard Dickenson—The Transactions of Conference—Early Life and literary Labours of Mr. Samuel Drew—The Conversion of Mr. John Edwards—His Piety and Usefulness—Progress of the Welsh Mission Work—Success of the Irish Missionaries on the Scene of the late Rebellion—Renewed Persecution in Jamaica—Conversion of Lady Cayley—Satisfactory State of Methodism—The Conference of 1803—Its Transactions—Committee of Privileges—Success of the Welsh Mission—George Lowe at Wrexham—The Difficulties of Methodist Progress shown in the Case of Congleton—Jonathan Saville Local Preacher at Halifax—His History—Conversion, Piety, and Usefulness—Methodism opposed by Dr. William Hales—Dr. Coke's ninth Voyage to America—The Conference of 1804—Its Transactions—The first Missionary Committee—A Missionary sent to Gibraltar—The melancholy Result—The great Zeal and Liberality of Dr. Coke—His Marriage—Benson's "Life of Fletcher"—Labours and Success of the Irish Missionaries—Mr. Bramwell at Hull.

The Conference of 1800.

THE Conference of 1800 was held in London, beginning on July 28th. Mr. James Wood was president, and Mr. Samuel Bradburn secretary. The return of preachers who had died in the preceding year, contains no names of special importance. Among those received into full Connexion we find Richard Watson and James Townley; and among those received on trial we have Joshua Marsden. The number of Circuits at this time in the British Islands was 161, being an increase of 5. The following changes produced this result:—Weatherfield, St. Ives, (Hunts,) and Framlingham, ceased to be reckoned as Circuits; and St. Neot's, Dursley, Jersey, Ludlow, Ruthin, Easingwold, Inverness, and Monaghan, were numbered as Circuits.

Important results of the annual review of the work.

We cannot but notice that this annual examination of the whole surface of these islands in reference to the relative progress of religion through the instrumentality of the Methodist ministry, must not only involve very considerable labour and attentive consideration, but must also be productive of very important results. To perceive this fully, it will be necessary to remember that before the introduction of Methodism there was nothing of this kind in existence. The Parliament or the Government might occasionally have seen reasons for instituting inquiries into the increase or decrease of mineral or metallic productions; the statistics of agriculture and manufactures had occasionally attracted close attention. But who had sought moral statistics or made inquiry into the progress or decline of real religion? It is true, the people had heard of visitations, and of episcopal and archidiaconal charges; but the religion of the people,—who had thought of making a close, careful, extensive annual inquiry, into this matter? We do not intend

by these remarks to insinuate, that Methodism contained all the religion of the country: nothing of the kind; we only mean that so far as Methodist teaching and influence were carried, this inquiry extended. And even thus far, it must have been productive of most essential benefit. It brought under review every part of the country into which Methodism had been introduced, and the action and effect of all the means and appliances which the Connexion employed for the purpose of spreading a knowledge of the Gospel of Christ and practical godliness throughout the land. Nor would the effect of this inquiry be less salutary on the minds of the preachers. For not only would the direct examination as to their individual character lead to great searchings of hearts, but also a comparison of the effects produced by their labours, which would to some extent certainly result from these inquiries, presenting as it did the rapid progress of religion in one Circuit, and its stationary or retrograde appearance in another, would strongly tend to stir up the energies of the men, and to stimulate their exertions for the accomplishment of their great object, the salvation of the people.

The number of members in the several Societies in the British Islands at this time was 109,751; being an increase on the year of 1,782. In Gibraltar, 50, the same as last year; and in the British American Societies and those in the West India Islands, 13,667; being an increase of 887. The Irish Missions had worked so satisfactorily, that the number of missionaries was doubled: although but twelve months had elapsed since they were begun with three missionaries, six were now employed in that interesting field of labour. In British America there were now eleven missionaries, being an increase of three: but in the West

Indies the number was reduced by two, there being now twenty employed there.

Transactions of the Conference.

"Sundry Miscellaneous Regulations" found in the Minutes of this Conference, fully confirm what is said above as to the important religious benefit which resulted to the preachers and people from the regular investigation made at this annual assembly. There had been, in the two or three previous years, some extensive and blessed revivals, some of which have been mentioned: these had been productive of great good, and in these gracious visitations many hundreds had been converted to God. But accompanying these "times of refreshing," there had been occasional extravagances of behaviour; and cases had occurred which justified the apprehension, that excitement and emotion had been sometimes mistaken for the work of the Spirit. Therefore, while thankful for the good which had been done, the Conference thought it right to exercise a godly jealousy, and to raise the note of caution against anything likely to mar the work of God. We accordingly find the following question and answer on the Minutes: "*Q.* Do we sufficiently explain and enforce practical religion, and attend to the preservation of order and regularity in our meetings for prayer, and other acts of Divine worship? *A.* Perhaps not. We fear there has been irregularity in some of the meetings, and we think that some of our hearers are in danger of mistaking emotions of the affections for experimental and practical godliness. To remedy or prevent, as far as possible, these errors, let Mr. Wesley's extract of Mr. Edwards's pamphlet on 'Religious Affections' be printed without delay, and circulated among our people." *

Another instance of wholesome godly oversight follows:

* Minutes, vol ii., p. 57.

"*Q.* Can anything be done to prevent what appears to us a great evil, namely, bands of music and theatrical singers being brought into our chapels when charity sermons are to be preached? *A.* Let none in our Connexion preach charity sermons, where such persons and such music are introduced. And let the stewards, trustees, and leaders be informed that such a practice is offensive to the Conference, who believe it has been hurtful to the minds of many pious people."

Improved arrangements for the Missions.

The foreign Missions were brought fully under consideration, and a general collection ordered to be made in the course of the year for their support. In respect of this most important branch of evangelical labour, the Connexion had proceeded in its usual course of following the openings of Providence, and making rules for the proper conduct of the work, as occasion for them arose. The appointment of a general collection rendered it necessary that some one in each Circuit should be charged with the care of it; it was accordingly ordered that "the superintendents shall keep exact accounts of all moneys received by them on account of the Missions, and of all disbursements of that money, and transmit those accounts annually to Dr. Coke, or, in his absence, to the London superintendent, to be laid before the Conference." Further important regulations were made as to the terms on which married and single men should be received as missionaries, and for insuring the adoption of Methodist discipline, and the introduction of uniformity as to the manner of conducting public worship and social means of grace. Every Mission station was thus constituted a Circuit, over which the superintendent exercised the same oversight as those who held that office in England.

The great subject, however, which pressed itself on the attention of this Conference, was the embarrassed state of

Embarrassed state of the connexional funds.

the connexional funds. The rapid and steady increase of the work at home was the cause of much financial difficulty. If the preachers had devoted their sole or principal attention to the improvement of existing Societies, and to the training up of members in piety and the observance of discipline, no doubt can be entertained that ample funds would have been forthcoming for the respectable support of the ministry. Instead of this, the grand apostolic principle of Wesley, not merely to go to those who wanted the Gospel, but to those who wanted it most, was acted on by his successors. They, while doing their utmost to nurture those who were gathered out of the world, penetrated the still benighted localities of the country, and extended the saving influence of the Gospel to people who, as yet, had not been taught to value it, and who accordingly were not prepared to support its ministers. The extent to which this was done must be taken into account, in order to perceive its necessary demand on the connexional funds. At the death of Wesley, according to the Minutes of the preceding Conference, the number of Circuits in the British Islands was 108, and of the preachers 294. At the Conference of 1800, ten years afterward, the Circuits were in number 161 and the preachers 417, being an increase of 53 Circuits and 123 preachers. These figures show, throughout this period, rather more than a yearly average of five new Circuits to be provided with houses, furniture, and every necessary equipment; and also a steady increase of twelve preachers each year to be supported, and provided with houses, horses, and every other necessary. Had all this been accomplished on the most moderate and economical scale, the increase of cost must have been very considerable. Instead, therefore, of being surprised that the Conference was embarrassed by the pressure of increasing demands, it

Its cause.

would have been a most wonderful thing if such difficulties had not arisen. One fact is very clear: the mode of publishing the state of the several funds in detail, which a few years before was pressed on the Conference in no very kindly spirit, was the only thing which enabled it to procure the necessary amount of support. In the absence of such published statements, the people never would have been persuaded that the necessities of the Connexion were so great, and the claims for increased contributions so extensive.

The concluding article in the Minutes for the year is, therefore, very appropriately "An Address to the Members of the Methodist Societies in England, Scotland, and Ireland, respecting the present State of their Finances." In this Address, the urgency of the case is stated by showing that the Book-room has made the largest possible advances; so much so, that it had left unpaid a debt of one thousand pounds to the paper merchant. The means of relief suggested was a subscription in the ensuing year sufficient to average one shilling each from every member in Society. This, it was stated, would just meet the case; and, considering that the gifts of the opulent ought fully to compensate the deficiencies of the needy, was shown to be but a reasonable requirement.

The Friendly Union.

There was a society, or association, formed in London in the year 1772, composed of members of the Methodist Societies; the members of it were then called "workhouse preachers." Similar associations were afterwards formed in other large towns under different names. In Bristol they were called "village preachers," in Leeds "prayer-leaders," in Dublin "poor-house preachers," and in London, at this time, "the FRIENDLY UNION." The design of this body was the employment of pious and

zealous members of the Methodist Society, who had some abilities for making known the truths of the Gospel to the poorer classes of the people, and for urging them to repentance and salvation. This most desirable object was attempted by preaching in workhouses, dwelling-houses, or other suitable places; and by employing those who had not ability for preaching, in visiting the poor and sick in their dwellings, holding prayer-meetings, and thus labouring to instruct and improve those whom other evangelical agencies did not reach. In the year 1800, an improved organization was prepared for this body in London, under the sanction of Messrs. Benson and James Wood, which supplied rules for the examination and admission of members, directions for their weekly and other meetings, arrangements for the appointment of officers, with the duties of each; and, in short, a complete code of regulations for all the objects of their union and course of duty. These rules, after a short period, were generally adopted by the similar institutions in other places, and contributed to increase their usefulness.

The Conference of 1800 presented a loyal address to the king, deprecating the atrocious attempt which had recently been made on his life, expressing thanks to God for his deliverance, and prayers for his future protection.

Richard Watson, his great talents.

Richard Watson was received into full Connexion at the Conference of 1800, and appointed to the Hinckley Circuit, with Mr. George Sargent as his superintendent. At this period, his biographer observes, "his past success, his present prospects, and the examples of ministerial zeal and ability with which he was surrounded, all conspired to operate upon his ardent and ingenuous mind, and to stimulate him to renewed diligence both in his ministry and studies." A striking instance of his aptitude in

acquiring knowledge may be here mentioned. While at Hinckley, Mr. Watson renewed his intercourse with his friend, Mr. Edmondson, who was then in the Ashby-de-la-Zouch Circuit. In one of these visits, Mr. Edmondson urged him to begin the study of Hebrew. He took the advice, and on that day month, Mr. Edmondson says, "meeting me again at the same place, he read the first Psalm, accounting grammatically for every word; and he read to me a beautiful paraphrase on the whole Psalm, which he had drawn up from the fine ideas expressed in the original."* Such, indeed, was the strength of his mind, that he could quickly master any subject to which he directed his attention. He had some time previously begun to read the Greek Testament, so that the vast stores of Holy Scripture, in all their primitive grandeur and fulness, were being opened to his investigation. But an event soon occurred which blasted this fair prospect, and greatly interfered with his usefulness as a minister, and his happiness as a man.

The reading of Mr. Watson at this period was limited only by the extent of his time, and means of procuring books. All those which came in his way he read. Judicious selection was perhaps not thought of,—certainly not practised. Among other great subjects which in this manner came under his notice, was the doctrine of the Trinity. He read all the books bearing on this subject which were within his reach, and as some of them did not pay that deference to the Scriptures which is requisite in all questions of this nature, but mixed up the authoritative declarations of holy writ with the speculations of a vain philosophy, it cannot be surprising that Mr. Watson's mind should sometimes be led into doubt and uncertainty, although he never denied

* Rev. Thomas Jackson's "Life of Richard Watson," p. 46.

the sound and orthodox views of Divine truth in which he had been trained. A case very similar was that of Joseph Benson, which is noticed in the preceding volume. Happily for him, he had a wise and able adviser in Wesley, who on that occasion, among other communications, wrote to him thus:—"I believe just what is revealed and no more; but I do not pretend to account for it, or to solve the difficulties that may attend it. Let angels do this, if they can; but I think they cannot. I think even these

'Would find no end, in wandering mazes lost.'

Some years since, I read about fifty pages of Dr. Watts's ingenious treatise upon the glorified humanity of Christ; but it so confounded my intellects, and plunged me into such unprofitable reasonings, yea, dangerous ones, that I would not have read it through for five hundred pounds. It led him into Arianism. Take care that similar tracts (all of which I abhor) have not the same effect upon you." Mr. Watson read this book among others, and if it was calculated to produce such an effect on the logical and practised mind of Wesley late in life, its influence upon an ardent young minister of twenty-one could not have been salutary, especially as he had not then learned to discriminate accurately between the distinct provinces of reason and of revelation.

Whatever effect was thus produced, was greatly magnified by the mind and manner of Mr. Watson. He had acquainted himself with the different forms which various errors had assumed, and their influence and effect on the church in different ages, and possessed considerable readiness in argumentation. These subjects were frequently discussed by him, and in such conversations he would occasionally employ the language which he had read; at others, he would appear to take a position contrary to

the sound and orthodox doctrine, in order to draw out the strength of his friends in support of the truth. As Mr. Jackson truly says, "Such a practice may succeed in the schools," but should never be employed in promiscuous Christian company, and especially before weak brethren. By these means Mr. Watson fell under the suspicion of heresy. It was affirmed that he was an Arian, and denied original sin, and the proper Godhead and atonement of Christ.

Had this been really true, efforts should have been made to ascertain the extent of the evil, and to convince the young minister of his error; and if reasoning and remonstrance had been unavailing, the case should have been submitted to a District Meeting. Nothing of this kind was done. The report of his defection from the truth was circulated among the people in his absence, and without his knowledge, until at length, when he went to one of the villages in his Circuit to preach, according to appointment, the house in which he had before been cordially entertained was shut against him. He was not allowed to preach to the congregation, and was even refused a night's lodging, where he had been received "as an angel of God." The effect of this glaringly improper conduct upon a generous and highly sensitive mind like Watson's was decisive; he immediately withdrew from his work as an itinerant preacher.

He leaves the Connexion.

Mr. Watson did not leave the Wesleyan Connexion because he was dissatisfied with either its doctrine or its discipline. A few weeks afterward, writing for the satisfaction of a friend, he declared, "I am not an Arian, nor ever professed myself to be one." Nor had discipline anything to do with the case. He left hastily, perhaps it may be said rashly, having been the subject of very discourteous and unreasonable treatment. Mr. Burdsall, who was Mr.

Watson's first superintendent, and who knew him intimately, says, "Never would he have left our Connexion, but for the usage of two or three of his brethren, who had neither the mind nor the generosity that were requisite to the right treatment of this active and inquiring young man." * There can be no doubt that in this instance Mr. Watson was disobedient to that Divine call by which he was led into the sacred office of the ministry. And of this fact he appeared to be afterwards painfully sensible. He has been often heard to say, "I only regret that I did not lay my case before my brethren, and leave myself in their hands."

One thing in this case is particularly observable. Harshly and unjustly as Mr. Watson had been treated, and keenly as he felt it, he made no attempt at retaliation; he formed no party, as to some extent he certainly might have done. He retired in peace, went into business, and devoted himself to a life of piety. The father of his wife was a zealous local preacher in the New Connexion. Mr. Watson, for the furtherance of his personal piety, united himself to that Christian body, and met in a Class in a village chapel, the leader of which was a farmer's labourer: by these means the disturbance which Mr. Watson's piety and peace had received was soon removed, and his mind regained its wonted tone. It was not long before he was requested to act as a local preacher. With this request he complied. After some time it was proposed to him to enter the ministry. He again consented: so that in about two years and a half after he had retired from the Hinckley Circuit, he went, as a New Connexion minister, to supply a vacancy at Manchester. As Mr. Watson was not influenced by any objection to Wesleyan discipline in leaving his old

Becomes a minister in the New Connexion.

* See this case at length in JACKSON'S "Life of Watson," p. 51.

friends, so it was from no partiality to its discipline that he joined the New Connexion. He felt that he was called of God to be a minister, and here an opening was set before him; for the theological opinions of the two bodies were identical. He at that time saw nothing in the discipline of the New Connexion to prevent him from conscientiously administering it; and, therefore, gladly entered into union with that body. In closing the present notice of this great man, we gladly adopt and repeat the sentiments so well expressed by the Rev. Thomas Jackson, to whose account we have been much indebted: "It is a high and permanent honour to the Methodist New Connexion to have been the means of rescuing from obscurity and sorrow this great and excellent man; and that it afforded him an opportunity of cultivating those talents by which multitudes of mankind have been so greatly instructed and edified, and which are likely to promote the interests of generations yet unborn. Had it not been for that Connexion, according to all human probability, he must have sunk under an overwhelming load of distress and unmerited obloquy." *

Daniel Isaac.

Although his name does not appear in the list of the young men admitted on trial this year, Daniel Isaac, who had for a short time previously been supplying a vacancy, was regularly appointed to the Louth Circuit. From the first his preaching was of an extraordinary character, strictly argumentative, very impressive, and occasionally remarkably severe. Great were the searchings of heart which this man of God experienced as to his call to the work. Many sleepless nights did he spend in earnest prayer to God for a fuller revelation of His will on this vital question. The Lord answered by setting His seal to his work. The first sermon he preached in his new Circuit was the means of

* JACKSON'S "Life of Watson," p. 57.

awakening one person, and bringing him to God; and his subsequent labours were very useful.

West Indies.

Our last reference to the work of God among the Negroes in the West Indies presented a cheering aspect. The beneficial effect of missionary labour upon the Negro mind had been acknowledged by the local government; and the supreme power at home had allowed two Missionaries to sail in a post-office packet, without the payment of the usual king's head-money. Yet these favourable circumstances soon changed. Mr. Stephenson, one of the missionaries so favoured, reached his destination in safety, and entered upon his work. There was then no law in existence to prevent him from ministering the Gospel to the slaves as well as the other inhabitants of the island. He accordingly began to preach, and his labours were crowned with success; many were awakened and brought to God, and perfect tranquillity prevailed.

Persecuting law in Jamaica.

No sooner, however, had Mr. Stephenson made an impression on the Negro mind, and obtained encouraging hopes of being useful to that degraded and injured race, than a spirit of opposition and persecution was excited, which strengthened as his success increased. At length (May, 1800) a law was enacted by the colonial legislature, prohibiting every one from preaching on the islands, unless duly qualified for the work according to the rites of the Church of England or the Church of Scotland. The penalties attached to a violation of this law were a fine of £50, and imprisonment at the discretion of the magistracy.

As the law was evidently made to silence Mr. Stephenson, by specifying qualifications which it was well known he did not possess, and as it could not be regarded as permanent, until it had been confirmed by the government at home, he did not feel bound to obey it, but held it to be, as it

unquestionably was, a persecuting measure. He accordingly continued to preach, and was soon taken into custody, and committed to jail. At first he intended to remain there, but, finding provisions and every other necessary enormously expensive in the prison, he procured bail. The trial at length came, and the result was what might have been expected. Mr. Stephenson was found guilty, with the "aggravating circumstance of having shaken hands with some of the black people." He was condemned to pay a fine of fifty pounds, and the fees of court, and to be imprisoned six months. He was immediately consigned to jail, in pursuance of his sentence.

Imprisonment of the missionary.

Dr. Coke, on being put in possession of these facts, immediately memorialized the government, and was indefatigable in procuring the aid of noblemen and gentlemen of influence, for the purpose of obtaining the abolition of this persecuting law; and he succeeded. It was disallowed by his Majesty in Council, and information of the fact was transmitted to Bermuda. Before it reached that island, however, Mr. Stephenson had endured the full measure of punishment assigned him, and was released from prison, so emaciated from the effects of his long confinement in that sultry climate, that he never fully recovered from the injuries he had sustained.

The law disallowed by government.

Little has been said in this work of the multitudinous publications with which the character of Wesley was assailed during his life, and by which the work he had founded was opposed after his death. A brief exhibition of this mass of libel, slander, and invective, would have materially increased the size of these volumes, and it has therefore been scarcely noticed; but it has been thought proper to mention a case or two in which these slanderers were brought to a sense of

their wickedness, and made all the reparation in their power, by a full and candid acknowledgment of their fault, although this was almost always too late to repair the injury which had been done. Such a case occurred this year. The following letter was received by Dr. Coke :—

One who had slandered Wesley confesses his sin.

"To the Rev. Dr. Coke, New Chapel, City Road, London.

"*Saturday Morning, January 24th,* 1801.

"Rev. Sir,

"As the author of a silly pamphlet published some years ago, entitled 'An impartial Review of the Life and Writings of the Rev. J. Wesley,' I have taken the liberty of addressing you on that subject, for the purpose of disburthening my mind, in some degree, of that intolerable weight with which it has been oppressed, in consequence of the folly and wicked tendency of that publication; and I now candidly declare to you and to the world, that most of the pretended facts therein mentioned are groundless, the charges sometimes false, and the characters, as delineated therein, both of the Rev. Mr. Wesley and others, are generally unjust, and unsanctioned even by my own opinion. At the same time I flatter myself you will have the candour to believe that my motives in the publication were influenced rather by folly and wantonness than deliberate wickedness; more especially if it be taken into consideration, that at that time I entertained sentiments somewhat different from what I do at present.

"I expect, from your known liberality, that no undue advantage will be taken of the candid declaration now made, (though you are at liberty, if you think proper, to make it public). Wishing you, in the mean while, all

imaginable prosperity in the great work in which you are so usefully and zealously engaged, I beg leave to subscribe myself, Rev. Sir,

"Your most obedient humble Servant,

"J. COLLET."

Dr. Coke was desirous to make this letter public, but was not content to do so without the express sanction of the writer. He accordingly wrote to Mr. Collet, expressing his wish to make the letter known through the press, and proposing to call on him at a time which he named for an answer. To this communication he received the following reply, which, with the previous letter, was published in several papers:—

"J. Collet's respects to Dr. Coke, informs him that he has no manner of objection to his letter being made public by the means of the press, but would not wish it by any other means, if Dr. Coke thinks that would answer the same end. J. Collet is sorry he cannot be at home the hour Dr. Coke proposes to call on him, but hopes this note will answer the same end.

"*Friday morning, January 29th*, 1801."

The Conference of 1801

The Conference of 1801 began at Leeds, July 27th. Mr. John Pawson was elected president the second time,—the first preacher who received this double honour,—and Dr. Coke secretary. The Circuits had by this time increased in number to 167, being 6 more than in the preceding year. This increase was the result of the following changes:—Ludlow, Berwick, Miltown, and Athlone ceased to be numbered as Circuits; while Wednesbury, Wigan, Barnsley, Mallow, Roscrea, Tullamore, Rathmelton,

Skipton, Lincoln, and Carlisle became Circuits. The number of members in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, was at this time 113,762, being an increase of 4,011 on the year. The number of members on the Mission stations is not given in the Minutes of this year.

Death of Mr. A. Mather.

Among the names of the preachers who died in the preceding year we find that of Alexander Mather. He was a thorough Methodist preacher,—an instrument in leading many sinners to the cross of Christ, and the experience of salvation; and was still more extensively useful in the edification of believers. He was for a long time one of the fathers of the Connexion; and, as such, entered into all its difficulties, taking his full share, not only in the routine duty of a preacher, but especially and pre-eminently in all the labours, anxieties, and cares connected with its government and general direction. The great Head of the church had richly endowed him with the gift of "government," and it was faithfully and zealously employed in the service of the church. The following is the official testimony borne to his character: "He was a perfect master of all the minutiæ of the doctrine and discipline of Methodism. Hereby he was enabled to afford Mr. Wesley very considerable assistance in the superintendence of the Societies. His wisdom and experience, his courage and perseverance, rendered him an invaluable friend to our Connexion, during some late troubles under which it suffered. He was never intimidated by any fear of calumny from pursuing those plans which he conceived to tend toward the peace and union of the Societies. His noble soul was elevated above the momentary opinion of a party. He looked only at the interests and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, and waited for his reward in a better

world." * He was a minister in the Connexion forty-two years.

A committee of preachers was appointed at this Conference to supply the Magazine with matter, and also to read, and to sanction or reject, any materials proposed to them by others for insertion in the connexional periodical.

Labours and successes of the Irish missionaries.

The Irish Mission was still prosecuted with great vigour. The labours of Messrs. Ouseley and Graham having been most successful the preceding year, the work was now confided to them in conjunction with Mr. Lawrence Kane, who was appointed for the south of Ireland. Ouseley and Graham were specially charged to labour in the province of Ulster; but with liberty to travel through the south and west of Ireland, as they thought proper. It is very necessary to convey a distinct idea of the labours, difficulties, oppositions, and successes of these apostolic men. Yet this is a difficult task. It can, indeed, be done but in part; and then only by the production of a series of details which appear tedious, but which alone reveal the operations of a great spiritual agency, which was blessed as an instrument for enlightening many of the darkest, and saving many of the worst, in that interesting, but, at that time especially, benighted land.

Just after this Conference, Mr. James Rennick, chairman of the Clones District, wrote a letter to Dr. Coke, in which he says, "About the latter end of the month of May, the two Irish missionaries, brothers Graham and Ouseley, met me at Carrigallen, (a fair-town in the county of Leitrim, Connaught,) about the borders of the county where we had the greatest outpouring of the Spirit. Other parts of the Circuit they had been in, but they had not been here before. Brother Ouseley preached, and towards the con-

* Minutes, vol. ii., p. 82.

clusion a girl was converted. Next day, they came to Armagh, and brother Ouseley preached in the market, (both the missionaries sitting on horseback, which is the usual way,) to a great crowd of people, notwithstanding it rained heavily all the time. In the evening brother Graham preached in a field about a mile from this, and good was done. Next day, about two miles off, we were driven into the fields again. Here brother Ouseley preached. Towards the conclusion, the cry of mourners broke out, and continued until the clouds of the night drove us into a large barn, where we remained a long time. Many, I think, were converted. But next day surpassed all. Being the Sabbath, brother Graham preached again, on a hill, to many hundreds, when the cry of mourners broke out again. Brother Ouseley preached in the evening to a large congregation. O, dear Sir, how awful to hear persons crying aloud for mercy in the open air, and many finding the pearl of great price! I am afraid, Sir, the Irish missionaries have ruined their constitutions." The late Thomas Davis, writing also to Dr. Coke, gives the following account: "Permit me, my dear Sir, to say something of the Irish missionaries, Messrs. Graham and Ouseley. The mighty power of God accompanied their word with such demonstrative evidence as I have never known, or, indeed, rarely heard of. I have been present in fairs and markets, while these two blessed men of God, with burning zeal and apostolic ardour, pointed hundreds and thousands to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. And I have seen the immediate fruit of their labour,—the aged and the young falling prostrate in the most public places of concourse, cut to the heart, and refusing to be comforted, until they knew Jesus and the power of His resurrection. I have known scores of these poor penitents to stand up and witness a good

confession; and, blessed be God, hundreds of them now adorn the Gospel of Christ Jesus. These two men have been the most indefatigable in their labours of love to perishing sinners, of any that I have yet known. From four to six hours they would preach, exhort, and pray; and next day, perhaps, ride a journey, and encounter the same difficulties. Thus,—

> 'They scorn their feeble flesh to spare,
> Regardless of their swift decline.'

"My dear Sir, I am wanting both in memory and language to set forth the wonders I have seen wrought by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. When I look at the usefulness of these two dear men, I am humbled to the dust; and, again, when I view them with shattered frames and wrecked constitutions, stepping into the grave, I am truly affected." * There can be no doubt that the severity of their labours and exposure had a serious effect upon their health for some time, and produced the dangerous appearances which are referred to above; but happily these anticipations of an early decease were unfounded. Both these zealous men were spared to render to the church a lengthened period of service.

Spiritual prosperity in Coleraine.

Nor was the progress of the good work in Ireland confined to the labours of these missionaries. The late venerable Rev. William Fergusson, who laboured from the Conference of 1800 to that of 1802 in the Coleraine Circuit, has left papers which supply the following information. During this period several persons were brought to God. Among these we find the name of John M'Kenny, who, in his early youth being restrained from evil by pious parents, was brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord when about twelve years of age; and continued to walk

* W. Reilly's "Memoir of Gideon Ouseley," p. 106.

steadily and uniformly in the ways of holiness, until he was called into the work of the ministry. He laboured for many years as a missionary in the island of Ceylon; and, after a short visit to his native country, was appointed by the Missionary Committee to Sydney in New South Wales, where he finished his earthly course, happy in God, in 1847. Another who was brought to the knowledge of the Lord about the same time with Mr. M'Kenny, is the Rev. Thomas Waugh, who from the time of his union with the Society has been distinguished by his steady attachment to Methodism and all its interests. He commenced his itinerancy in the year 1808, has occupied the most important stations in the Irish Connexion, has devoted all the powers of his energetic mind to promote the interests of the church of God, and still continues to exercise a most important and beneficial influence both amongst preachers and people.

Thomas Waugh.

A gracious work of God which took place about the same time amongst the military then stationed in Coleraine, is worthy of notice. One of those who were then brought to a saving knowledge of the truth, Mr. Isaac Phenix, was called into the work of the ministry in England, where he travelled for many years, and was well known and highly esteemed. Also Sergeant Ross West, of the 23rd Dragoons, and his wife, were both savingly converted to God: they became members of the Society, and, while in Coleraine, continued to adorn their Christian profession. They subsequently settled in Glasgow, where they were steady and useful members of Society, both having the charge of Classes in that city. The gracious work extended from Coleraine to the neighbouring Societies, especially to that at Billy, which had been formed for several years, and was then blessed with two pious and

zealous leaders, David M'Curdy and Neal Horan, who with their wives exerted a very powerful moral influence on the neighbourhood. Amongst those who were then brought to the knowledge of God, was Matthew M'Ilroy, whose enmity against Methodism had been so great, that in the time of the famine of 1800, when it was extremely difficult even for those who had money to procure food, he compelled his wife to return some oatmeal which she had got from Mr. M'Curdy, as he would not eat any Methodist bread. But in the following winter he was induced to attend the ministry of the Methodists; and being deeply awakened at a prayer-meeting, when he could no longer conceal the anguish of his soul, he retired from the house to a meadow at some distance, where he knelt down, and continued to wrestle with God, till He spoke peace to his soul. He then united himself with the people he had so much despised. After some time he was appointed leader of a Class, and maintained a character distinguished for uniform uprightness and integrity to the close of life. The privations which the children of God, and the people generally, were called to endure at this time, were very great, and occasioned not so much by scarcity of money, as scarcity of food. A pious young man was known to have travelled a whole summer-day with a guinea in his pocket, and to have been unable in the whole of the time to procure a pound of food. But these calamities were sanctified in a very special manner; so that there was a great deepening of the work of grace in the hearts of believers, and a very extensive awakening and ingathering of souls into the church of God. In closing his account of the work of God in Coleraine, Mr. Fergusson notices the untimely death of one of his colleagues, William Ap Richard. He was a youth of great seriousness and deep piety, possessed

Awful scarcity of food, accompanied by spiritual blessing.

a sound understanding and judgment beyond his years, was mighty in prayer, appeared to approach the throne of God with the utmost confidence through the atonement of Jesus Christ, and possessed the happy art of communicating instruction in few and plain words. His sermons were generally clear expositions of the word of God, rich in evangelical truth, and well calculated to promote the best interests of his hearers. Having been put to sleep in a bed in which a lad, ill with fever, had lain several days, he caught the disease, and was just able to reach Coleraine, where, after suffering much, he finished his course, truly happy in God, aged twenty-two years.*

There are few men besides Dr. Coke, who—being charged with the oversight of the Methodist Societies established among the scattered inhabitants of Nova Scotia, the rearing up of many extensive missions for the Negro slaves and others in the West Indies, and the provision of a preached Gospel in their own language for the wild inhabitants of the west and south of Ireland, with all the financial cares and ministerial responsibilities arising out of these great operations—would not have thought they had sufficiently large and onerous work on their hands. But such was the burning ardour of his soul, such his zeal to carry the Gospel where it was most wanted, that he was limited in his aspirations and efforts only by the range of possibility. He accordingly, at the Conference of 1800, projected a plan for introducing the Gospel into Wales, by Methodist preaching in the Welsh language. Being himself a native of the principality, he had long felt much on account of the moral degradation of his countrymen, and pathetically called the attention of the Conference to their spiritual destitution, and showed the necessity of efforts for their improvement. This appeal

Dr. Coke initiates the Welsh Mission.

* MSS. of the late Rev. William Fergusson.

was favourably received; and it was ascertained that Mr. John Hughes, who had been recently called out into the English work, was able to preach in the Welsh language, and willing to go as a missionary to his countrymen, if another could be found to go with him. Mr. Owen Davies, then a travelling preacher of eleven years' standing, who was a native of North Wales, having some knowledge of the Welsh language, was requested to accompany Mr. Hughes; and having readily given his consent, the two were immediately appointed to this sphere of labour, the town of Ruthin being named as their home and head quarters. These men were every way qualified for the important work to which they were called. Mr. Hughes, who had been educated for the Established Church, was not only a good scholar and a thorough Welshman, but a man of clear understanding and sound judgment. Mr. Davies was intelligent, generous, and warm-hearted, an able preacher, and well acquainted with the laws and usages of Methodism. These were the men whom Providence prepared and sent for a great work of grace among the natives of ancient but long neglected Cambria.

Mr. Edward Jones, his labours and success.

To some extent, indeed, the work had been already begun. An amiable young man, named Edward Jones, of Bathavarn, in the vale of Clwyd, North Wales, had been converted to God in Manchester, and, having there joined the Methodist Society, was sometime afterward induced by ill health to return to his native place. In the prospect of this change, he felt it to be a sore trial to leave a town abounding with religious privileges like Manchester, and to go to a place where, as far as he knew, there was not one like-minded with himself in respect of religion. Thus painfully impressed, before leaving Manchester he called on the superintendent, Mr. Bradburn, to ask his advice.

Mr. Bradburn received him with much kindness, and advised him on his way home to call on the preacher at Chester, and to request him to come over to Ruthin occasionally to preach. In compliance with this advice, Mr. Jones called on Mr. Hutton at Chester, who, in reply to the request, said, "I will be glad to come, if you can get me an open door." Mr. Jones assured him that this should be done. Having returned home, Mr. Jones, rejoicing in the prospect of having the Methodist preacher in his native place, to preach to his neighbours the truths which had been the means of his own enlightenment and salvation, went to Ruthin, and hired a room; and Mr. Ridal, one of the preachers from Chester, shortly afterward paid him a visit, and preached to an attentive congregation. From this time one of the Chester preachers came there once a fortnight; and, in the absence of a preacher, Mr. Jones himself held prayer-meetings, which were encouragingly attended. For a while he had no one to assist him, but at length he was induced to give the people a word of exhortation. When he had done so in the English language for a few times, there was a general desire on the part of the people that he would speak to them in their own tongue; for as yet he had not attempted to speak in Welsh, not being so familiar with it as with the English. Yielding to their request, he resolved to make a trial, and succeeded much better than he had anticipated. The Lord was pleased to own his labours in the conversion of many souls. A Society was formed in the place, and the great Head of the church vouchsafed His continued presence and blessing.

Great, however, were the questionings and curiosity that prevailed as to this new religion, (as it was called,) which the son of Bathavarn had brought to the place. Some said it

was a bad and dangerous doctrine; others, who were not quite so dissatisfied, stayed to ask what its errors were. The answer to this was, that it taught that "Christ had died for all," and that "every man may be saved." This caused many to read their Bibles with more care, to see whether this thing was true or not. The same motive led many to hear the preachers, that they might judge for themselves.

Davies and Hughes enter upon their work.

Thus the way had been prepared for the appointed missionaries, so that when Messrs. Davies and Hughes arrived, they were received with great joy. They opened their commission without delay, and, not confining their labours to the locality already visited, went through the length and breadth of the land, proclaiming salvation to all through faith in Jesus Christ. Thus the hearts of many were made glad; for the Gospel came "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." At the Conference of 1801, Messrs. John Bryan and Edward Jones were called out in addition to the two ministers previously appointed; and their labours also were eminently successful. At the close of the year 1801, the first Welsh Wesleyan chapel was built in the town of Denbigh, and it was opened on the first day of 1802 by Messrs. Davies and Hughes. After evening preaching, a lovefeast was held, when no less than three hundred new converts, drawn together from different places, were present; and eighty of them testified what God had done for their souls. Those times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord were long and gratefully remembered by many. The good work still rapidly progressed. Thousands flocked to hear the new sect; and, notwithstanding opposition and persecution, the hand of the Lord was

It is crowned with success.

with them, and mighty works were wrought by their humble instrumentality.*

Who can peruse the narrative of such evangelical operations among the ignorant peasants of Ireland, and the neglected inhabitants of Wales, and see the abundant success with which it pleased God to crown them, without acknowledging that our country had not outgrown its need of Methodism, and that Methodism had not lost its true character, as a messenger of mercy, carrying the Gospel with saving efficacy to those who needed it most? Poor as were all the connexional funds, cramped in their exertions by pecuniary and other difficulties as the preachers were, still the work maintained its onward course, and extended the salvation of the Gospel to districts and people previously enveloped in thick moral darkness. And the manner in which these operations were carried on is as remarkable as the success which attended them. Without the pomp of power, or the glare of intellect, we here see plain, simple-minded men, who, having obtained salvation themselves, were made by the grace of God instrumental in leading others to the experience of the same mercy.

Dr. Coke's Commentary.

In the course of this year, Dr. Coke's Commentary on the Old Testament began to be issued in numbers. This was the first attempt of the kind among the Methodists, subsequent to Wesley's death. We shall elsewhere have occasion to notice the character of this work. It is here referred to, as forming an era in the literary history of the body; and to mark the extraordinary fact, that a man so fully engaged in multifarious and anxious duties as the doctor

* MS. communication from the Rev. Isaac Jenkins; and letter of Edward Jones in the "Welsh Magazine," 1828, p. 313.

was, should have been able to secure time sufficient for the compilation of a Commentary on the Scriptures.

Religious prosperity at Nottingham.

During this year the work prospered at Nottingham. Mr. W. E. Miller's ministry was particularly owned of God. On the first Sabbath morning that he preached in the town, several who had been seeking the Lord were saved, and many more after the preaching in the evening. "Indeed," as an eye-witness reports, "in every meeting, conviction seized men and women of all ranks and descriptions; and many cried aloud for mercy, and found peace through a crucified Saviour." Not only was his preaching attractive, leading several respectable families to the chapel who did not formerly attend; other circumstances, which are no matters of rejoicing, but the reverse, tended to increase the congregation and the Society. On one Easter Sunday morning, the curate of the reverend doctor who served the church, drove fifty Methodists away from the communion table, and declared he would not administer the sacrament to Dissenters. Such conduct, in conjunction with the character of the preaching in that edifice, induced many persons who formerly went to church to attend the chapel. In the course of this year three hundred members were added to the Society.

Revival in Leeds.

Leeds was at this time very graciously visited, and the labours of the preachers were crowned with great success. The ministers appointed this year were Messrs. John Barber, William Bramwell, and Richard Reece. Of this season Mr. James Blackett observes: "At that time five Classes met in High Street, St. Peter's, and the number of members added to them was very great. It appeared as though all the inhabitants of the place would soon be converted to God. Their minds were so much affected, that those who had been the most profligate ceased to persecute,

and many of them began to pray. Being the leader of two Classes, I visited every house on both sides of the street, and spoke faithfully to each family respecting the salvation of their souls. Many whom I little expected I found awakened to a sense of their danger, and engaged in seeking the Lord in secret. Several of these were desirous of meeting in Class, but had not been previously invited. Joy glistened in their eyes, when informed that I was come to seek the wandering sheep, and give them opportunity of receiving religious instruction among the people of God." In the course of the year, the members were increased about three hundred and seventy, besides making up for deaths and removals.

Origin of Daniel Isaac's work on "Universal Restoration."

Mr. Daniel Isaac, whilst labouring in the Lynn Circuit, was informed that Mr. Vidler, in advocating the doctrine of universal restoration, frequently lavished his vituperations on the Methodists, and challenged all the preachers to refute his statements. Moved by this conduct, Mr. Isaac on one occasion went to hear him, took notes of his discourse, called on him the next morning with the notes, and asked him to be candid enough to say, whether what he had written conveyed a correct view of his arguments and objections. Mr. Vidler admitted that it was so. Mr. Isaac then told him, that from the views which he entertained of the nature and tendency of the doctrine, he felt it his duty to oppose it, and to protect those who might sit under the Methodist ministry against it; further adding, that he proposed to enter into a refutation of it next Lord's day, and he had waited on him, (Mr. Vidler,) for any correction he might offer, as he wished to do him perfect justice in accurately stating what he had advanced. Mr. Isaac carried his purpose into accomplishment, and preached as he had promised.

This course led to the publication of one of his first pieces on "Universal Restoration." But this was not given to the world until some time afterward; for which delay Mr. Isaac assigned the following reason: "I hesitated for a long time about engaging in the controversy, in the hope that some preacher more competent to the task would have taken it up." *

Adam Clarke at Liverpool.

Mr. Adam Clarke was appointed by the Conference of 1801 to Liverpool, when he not only entered upon a zealous discharge of the duties of his office, and prosecuted with his usual diligence his literary and scientific studies, but also displayed his ardent desire for the intellectual improvement of the inhabitants of that large and important town. Under this influence, soon after his arrival, he organized a society for this object, under the title of the "Philological Society." The rules, questions, and introductory address, delivered to this body at its formation, were drawn up by Mr. Clarke, he having been appointed its first president.

His health fails.

These accumulated labours and studies were too much even for Mr. Clarke's robust physical system. He became alarmingly ill, so that he was deprived of all sensation, and his family and friends apprehended the most distressing results; but he rallied, and persisted in discharging the duties of his office. In the ensuing April, however, he again became worse, and was taken by a friend to London, that he might obtain the best medical advice. This was very discouraging: he was told that he must altogether cease from reading, writing, preaching, &c., for at least twelve months, or he would soon be a dead man. He received this opinion with the fortitude of a Christian, and conveyed it to his wife with exquisite tenderness: but the prognostica-

* "The Polemic Divine," p. 31.

tion was at fault; God had other work for him to do, and he was restored.

The Conference of 1802

The Conference of 1802 was held at Bristol, and began on July 26th. Joseph Taylor was the president, and Dr. Coke the secretary. The number of Circuits was now 171, an increase of 4, the result of the following changes:—Dover and Wigan ceased to be Circuits; and Sevenoaks, Higham Ferrers, Ashburton, Retford, Youghal, and Manor Hamilton became Circuits. The number of Irish missionaries was increased to 4:—Connaught and County of Clare, Lawrence Kane, and T. Allen; the rest of Munster, Leinster, and Ulster, Charles Graham and Gideon Ouseley. Among the names of preachers admitted on trial we find John Davis, and Samuel Warren (afterwards Doctor). Among those who died during the preceding year, are the names of Christopher Hopper and Peard Dickenson. The entrance of both these on the work of the ministry, and the incidents of their early career, have been noticed in the first volume of this work. It remains to add, that the former of these valued preachers travelled forty years in the Connexion, taking his full share of its labour, danger, and privation. Being then about sixty-three years of age, and feeling his strength fail, he built a house adjoining the chapel at Bolton-le-Moors, where his wife henceforth resided, while he laboured in Bolton and the neighbouring Circuits until his strength was entirely gone. During the whole course of his itinerancy, no charge or accusation was ever brought against him for any instance of misconduct. He was prudent, steady, zealous, and active, especially in his younger days. To a friend who visited him a few days before his decease, he said, "I have not the shadow of a doubt; and as for the enemy, I know not what is become of him, I have neither seen nor heard

Obituary: Christopher Hopper and Peard Dickenson.

of him for a long time; I think he has quitted the field." He retained his confidence to the last, and fell asleep in Jesus in his eightieth year, and the forty-seventh of his ministry.

Of Peard Dickenson's early life some account has also been given. He maintained to the end of his course a high character as an unaffected, simple-minded Christian, and a faithful and consistent minister. His preaching talents were not brilliant, but they were greatly improved toward the latter part of his life. His constitution of body was delicate, and his infirmities many; and during the last three years of his life his afflictions were very great, complicated, and painful; but he bore them all with the most exemplary patience. A murmuring word was never heard from his lips, nor a discontented look observed in his countenance; but resignation, meekness, long-suffering, and love were the habitual tempers of his mind, and the rules of his conversation. His discourses with the friends who from time to time visited him, were most intelligent and instructive; and, after affectionate expressions of love and consolation to his mournful partner, and other relatives and friends, in the greatest peace and most triumphant joy he sweetly slept in Jesus, on Saturday, May 15th, in the forty-fourth year of his age. His last words were, "Hark! do you not hear? They are come for me: I am ready, quite ready! Stop, say nothing but—Glory! glory!" * A very interesting and edifying memoir of him was written by Mr. Benson and extensively circulated.

The number of missionaries in British America and the West Indies remained without material alteration. The number of members returned to this Conference from the Circuits in the British Islands was 119,660, being an

* Minutes, vol. ii., p. 125.

increase of 5,848. The number of members in Society in British America and the West Indies was 15,939, an increase of 2,272. We are very far from desiring to test an important religious question on mere statistical grounds; but the steady and continued increase of numbers in the Methodist Societies is a great fact which ought not to escape attention. That these should have gone on increasing for forty years in successive progression, every year, sometimes by some thousands, at others by a few hundreds, yet still always increasing, is a circumstance worthy of serious consideration. There can be no doubt that this was the case for the half-century before this year, although the numbers of the early years are not preserved. In the consideration of this circumstance, it must not be forgotten that this was not a season of sweet tranquillity and general national prosperity, but the reverse in every particular. Yet in these most unfavourable circumstances, when the foundations of civil society were shaken to their centre by the clamour of faction and the heavings of revolutionary passion; when the truth and profession of Christianity were assailed by all the powers of perverted ingenuity, wit, and ridicule, and, above all, by a proud philosophy; and when the masses of the people were driven to the verge of desperation by the dearth and scarcity of food; and while, above all, able and energetic men were perseveringly labouring to persuade the members and congregations of Methodism that the system was radically corrupt, and the preachers selfish, designing, and tyrannical;—through all these circumstances, and under the pressure of all these evils, the Methodist Societies continued year by year, without intermission or interruption, to increase in numbers and religious power.

Further and improved regulations were now made re-

The transactions of Conference.

specting the terms on which missionaries were to be received for the West Indies, and in regard to the time they were expected to remain there, and what was to be done in case of their illness. Superintendents were directed to look out in their respective Circuits, among the travelling and local preachers, for persons suitable and willing to engage in the Mission work.

A general collection was ordered to be made throughout the Connexion, for the support of the West India, Irish, and Welsh Missions; the two latter being thereby formally recognised as parts of the great Mission work. Forty-two Societies applied to this Conference for leave to have the sacraments administered in their chapels, and their names are entered on the Minutes as having obtained their desire,—a proof that the wish to enjoy this Christian privilege was making rapid progress through the Connexion.

This Conference allowed collections to be made through certain specified parts of the country on behalf of eighteen new chapels. Some of these were probably in the stead of others which had been wrested from their legitimate purpose by seceders; but generally they were called for by the steady increase of the work, and the large addition of members and hearers which had taken place.

These Minutes also contain an acknowledgment of the existence of certain evils in the body, and a very earnest exhortation against them. It is said, "1. Many of the wives of the preachers dress like vain women of the world. 2. Some of the preachers set them the example." Irreverent postures of the people during public worship, and neglect of the house of God, are also pointed out, and amended behaviour urged.

An improved mode of examining candidates for the ministry, which was called for by the increasing extent of

the work, was now introduced. As the minute specifies both the old mode and the new, it is given entire. "At present the candidate is supposed to have passed the Quarterly Meeting, from which he is recommended to the District Meeting. In addition to this, let him, if possible, attend the District Meeting, and be examined *before all the brethren present*, respecting his *experience*, his knowledge of Divine things, his reading, his views of the doctrines of the Gospel, and his regard for Methodism in general. The preacher who examines him shall be chosen by the ballot of the District Committee. After the examination, the candidate shall withdraw, and the Committee shall deliberate on the propriety or impropriety of his admission on trial, and determine whether he shall be recommended to the ensuing Conference, or not. If it be not convenient for the candidate to attend the District Meeting, three of the Committee shall be chosen by ballot, and appointed to act in this instance for the District." *

The Connexion was indebted to Mr. Joseph Entwisle for this very salutary measure. He saw that as persecution declined, and especially as many of the hardships to which the early preachers had been exposed were being diminished, and at least tolerable accommodations were generally provided for them, persons might now desire to enter the Methodist ministry who would not have submitted to its former dangers and privations; and that, therefore, this change of circumstances called for increased caution to prevent improper persons from being received, and so to maintain the purity and efficiency of the Methodist pastorate. He accordingly, after much prayerful consideration, sketched the plan which, with a

* Minutes, vol. ii., p. 142.

very slight alteration, was adopted by the Conference, as given above.

Prior to the introduction of this rule, the candidate was recommended by the Quarterly Meeting; and his name simply being sent to the District Meeting, it was, unless any objection was made, passed on to the Conference. The interposing, therefore, of this District-Meeting examination, where the character, attainments, and qualifications of the candidate could be more deliberately scrutinized than at the Conference, was a most important protective measure.

This case leads us to notice a remark which is frequently made in respect to the origin and adoption of the successive alterations which have from time to time been made in the polity of Methodism. In respect of this, and several other instances, it has been said, "This was one of the evils pointed out by Mr. Kilham; but the correction was not then adopted, although it was afterwards introduced, as is the case in many other matters." And this observation is frequently so put, as to intimate that the Methodist reformer was entitled to all the credit of the alteration; while the leading ministers of the day are supposed to have been guilty of delaying evident improvements from factious or party motives, and afterwards adopting them as their own. This is, however, a violent perversion of the facts. It is true that Mr. Kilham complained of the facility with which persons were received as travelling preachers, and suggested that in consequence very improper persons might intrude themselves into the ministry. But he did not, like Mr. Entwisle, in a Christian temper come forth with wise and well-digested means for removing the evil. On the contrary, the defect was exhibited for the purpose of insinuating intentional dis-

honesty on the part of superintendents, and suggesting the possibility of their knowingly introducing an improper person into the ministry for the fee of a few pounds. Is there any analogy between the conduct of the two parties? Does not one, instead of promoting improvement, interpose a barrier to its progress? And must not this always be the result of such conduct, while human nature remains what it is? But the other really grapples with the defect, and supplies a remedy.

Early life and literary labours of Mr. Samuel Drew.

In the autumn of this year, an Essay appeared on the "Immortality and Immateriality of the human Soul." Being published by subscription, the first edition of the work was soon disposed of, and a second very favourably received by the public. It was noticed with high commendation in the leading Reviews of the day, and regarded as an important contribution in support of the doctrines of Christianity. The work possessed intrinsic merit, and took a highly respectable position in the literature of the time; but perhaps a portion of its celebrity arose from the known character and circumstances of its author, who was Samuel Drew, a shoemaker and Methodist local preacher, of St. Austell, in Cornwall.

This highly gifted and excellent man was the son of poor but pious parents, who resided near St. Austell. His father was a Methodist leader and local preacher; his mother was also a Methodist, and possessed uncommon energy and zeal. The circumstances of the parents obliged them to employ their children very early in life. Samuel at the tender age of eight years worked at a stamping mill, where tin ores were purified and prepared for the market; and, before he was eleven years old, was apprenticed to a shoemaker. As he grew up, he displayed a spirit of great daring and energy, which led him into much wickedness,

and frequently exposed him to serious danger; but a kind and watchful Providence preserved him. At length, when he was about twenty years of age, his brother died, and Dr. Adam Clarke, then a young man, stationed on the East Cornwall Circuit, which contained St. Austell, preached his funeral sermon, standing on the steps which led to Mr. Drew's barn-door. The solemn event had prepared Samuel Drew's mind for serious thought; the word reached his heart; he joined the Methodist Society, and commenced a new course of life. These events took place in June, 1785.

Although the vigour and energy of a great mind will force its way through almost every conceivable impediment, and grasp the means of usefulness and eminence, it seems very strange that a person circumstanced as Samuel Drew then was should enter upon a course of literary study. A few words will show the circumstances which led to this strange result. As was not unfrequent at that time in the market towns of Cornwall, the person who had employed Samuel Drew as a journeyman shoemaker, carried on several branches of business. He was by trade a saddler, and did something in the bookbinding line; whilst Samuel had the shoemaking department under his special charge. This shop was visited by a class of people superior to any with whom Mr. Drew had hitherto been brought into contact. Here he heard conversations on the current topics of the day, and not unfrequently discussions on the conflicting doctrines of Calvinism and Arminianism. These awakened his curiosity, and roused his spirit to seek after knowledge. The books brought to the shop for binding informed him of means of instruction of which he had previously no conception. Among these, Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding" made a deep and powerful

impression on his mind. He read to the utmost of his opportunities, and searched dictionaries diligently, that he might understand what he read. Indeed, with the most limited means, he became a hard student.

About two years after his conversion, with a capital of fourteen shillings, and a loan of five pounds, which had been pressed on his acceptance for the purpose by a religious friend, Mr. Drew went into business on his own account. Years of difficulty, toil, and privation followed; but these were endured manfully and conquered. A few years sufficed to enable him to carry on his business, and provide for his wants, without embarrassment. He married, was appointed a class-leader and a local preacher, bought a few books, and prosecuted his studies with great diligence. When, however, he had disposed of such preliminary inquiries as he thought necessary, he seriously considered the line of study to which he should devote his fragments of time. Astronomy was first suggested to his mind as a most favourite subject; but he soon found himself deficient of the necessary mathematical knowledge. History was next thought of; but here the grand objection was the cost of the necessary books. Metaphysics was finally selected, as free from these difficulties; and to this study he devoted all his spare time and energy.

After Mr. Drew had gone on in this way for some time, a young friend of his, a surgeon by profession, who had been conducted to the very verge of Deism by the continued perusal of infidel writings, and particularly of Paine's "Age of Reason," put that profane work into the hands of Mr. Drew, in the hope that it would have the same effect on him. Mr. Drew carefully read the book. The allegations and arguments contained in it led to very many conversations on the subject between the two friends, until at

length the surgeon, finding that Mr. Drew's faith in the Bible was unshaken, withdrew the book, and transferred his own doubts from the Bible to the principles of Paine; and soon after happily realized a confidence in the authenticity of Divine revelation. The rapid decline and death of this young surgeon soon afterwards impressed these conversations on Mr. Drew's mind with great force. He accordingly committed what he could remember of the arguments which he had used to paper, and put these notes into the hands of Mr. Truscott and Mr. Treffry, who were at that time preachers on the Circuit. They were men of sound sense and correct judgment, and strongly urged him to publish his remarks, as a reply to Paine's mischievous work. This was done in September, 1799, the work being addressed immediately to Thomas Paine himself, who was then alive. This pamphlet attracted great attention, and secured for the author prominent notice in the principal Reviews, and the approval and continued friendship of the Rev. John Whitaker, rector of Ruan Lanyhorne, the accomplished and learned author of the "History of Manchester," and other valuable antiquarian and historical works.

Soon after the publication of that piece, Mr. Drew attempted poetry, by printing an elegy of nearly six hundred lines; but in this ethereal branch of literature he did not succeed so as to induce him to make a second attempt. His pen, however, was not long idle. The Rev. R. Polwhele, vicar of Manaccan, had got into a controversy with Dr. Hawker, of Plymouth; and although the doctor had no more to do with Methodism than Mr. Polwhele, the latter, acting on the universal assumption of the day,—that every evangelical minister was to be treated as a Methodist,—introduced into the controversy a scurrilous publication,

which he called, "Anecdotes of Methodism." To this production Mr. Drew soon furnished an effective and complete reply. Following the clerical author through every one of his alleged facts, he clearly convicted him of bearing false witness against his neighbours. The following is Mr. Drew's own account of the case:—"I have now gone through the facts themselves, and have given a specific answer to every anecdote which is worthy of notice. Out of thirty-four anecdotes, eight are false, of six I can get no account, nine are misrepresented, five are related with the omission of many material circumstances, and all the remainder are revised and corrected." * Yet, although this pamphlet was manifestly honest and earnest, and in some places severe, it was evidently so devoid of ill-will and unkind personal feeling, that when soon afterwards Mr. Drew published the "Essay on the Soul" above mentioned, Mr. Polwhele generously wrote a handsome critique in its favour in the "Anti-Jacobin Review."

Before we leave Mr. Drew for the present, it may be desirable to place before the reader the account which he has left on record of the manner of his early studies. "During my literary pursuits, I regularly and constantly attended on my business, and do not recollect that one customer was disappointed by me through these means. My mode of writing and study may have in them something peculiar. Immersed in the common concerns of life, I endeavour to lift my thoughts to objects more sublime than those with which I am surrounded; and, while attending to my trade, I sometimes catch the fibres of an argument, which I endeavour to note, and keep a pen and ink by me for that purpose. In this state, what I can collect through the day remains on any paper which I have at

* "The Life of Samuel Drew. By his Son," p. 130.

hand, till the business of the day is dispatched, and the shop shut, when, in the midst of my family, I endeavour to analyse in the evening such thoughts as had crossed my mind during the day. I have no study, no retirement; I write amid the cries and cradles of my children; and frequently, when I review what I have written, endeavour to cultivate 'the art to blot.' Such are the methods which I have pursued, and such the disadvantages under which I write." His usual seat, after closing the business of the day, was a low nursing-chair, beside the kitchen fire. Here, with the bellows on his knees for a desk, and the usual culinary and domestic matters in progress around him, his works, prior to 1805, were chiefly written.* Thus, one of the principal literary laymen of Methodism grew up into usefulness and celebrity.

Early in 1803, a gentleman died in London whose history furnishes an example of the extensive sphere of usefulness which Methodism opens up to pious and devoted laymen; and in like manner shows the effective influence which they are thus enabled to exercise in the support of the cause of Christ, and for the promotion of His kingdom. Regarding this case as the type of a class, we give the narrative at some length.

The conversion of Mr. John Edwards.

Mr. John Edwards, when about sixteen years of age, was taken by his father from their residence in Hampshire, on a visit to London. Having to stay there over a Sabbath, they attended church on the Lord's day, as far as appears from the account, without any particular object, and with no reference at all to the minister who officiated. It happened, however, that the Rev. Mr. Madan preached; and under the discourse of that celebrated

* "The Life of Samuel Drew. By his Son," p. 120.

minister young Edwards was clearly convinced of his sinfulness and danger, and of his consequent need of a Saviour. He soon afterwards, on his return home, was made a partaker of that peace which the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins can alone produce, and became a member of the Methodist Society in his native place. He afterwards formed an acquaintance with Mr. John Mason, subsequently an eminent travelling preacher, and with Mr. Peter Price. They took sweet counsel together as to their spiritual progress, while a prayerful reading of Holy Scripture, and hearty devotion to the will of God, made their profiting appear unto all. Attention was soon drawn to Mr. Edwards's adaptation for usefulness in the church, and he was urged to give a word of exhortation for the edification of the people. At length he so far complied as to make an effort; but, not succeeding to his satisfaction, he desisted for some time. His pious zeal, however, soon led him again to venture, when he spoke with such freedom, that he frequently after exhorted, and at length was regularly enrolled with the local preachers. Forty years before his death he removed to London, and resided at Lambeth, where he carried on business as an architect. Here he had much and very edifying intercourse with Wesley and the leading preachers of the body. He set apart a room in his house for the worship of God; and the Gospel was there regularly preached. As his means increased, so his liberality abounded. He converted an adjoining building into a decent chapel at his own expense, and had the high satisfaction of seeing the conversion of many sinners from the error of their ways, and their happy introduction into the blessedness of the salvation of God.

His piety and usefulness.

His life, however, was not unattended by sorrow. He

entered into a partnership with another person for the erection of several houses in Marylebone. The project proved unprofitable, and the partners were obliged to call their creditors together, and offered them all the property in satisfaction of their demands. This the creditors accepted, knowing the straightforwardness and honesty of the parties, and gave them a legal discharge from all demands, although the property realized but twelve and sixpence in the pound. This affliction served but as a stimulus to this good man: he devoted himself to his earthly and spiritual interests with renewed zeal; and God having prospered his efforts, he was after some time able to pay every one of his former creditors the entire amount from which they had legally discharged him. Although he had many and important temporal affairs on his hands, he ceased not to exercise his spiritual gifts, and to cultivate his mind with great diligence. Hence his preaching was agreeable and effective. And, as his circumstances in life became more easy, he gladly devoted more of his time to religious duties, especially preaching. In doing this he never obtruded his services, nor interfered with the work of others: his aid was eagerly sought, and cheerfully given. About the year 1800 he was afflicted with a disorder in his eyes, and within twelve months afterward he was attacked with paralysis, from which, however, he rallied, and resumed his preaching as before. Again he suffered in a similar way, and again he returned to his godly work; until, while at Irchester in Northamptonshire, preparing to go to a neighbouring chapel to preach, he had a third paralytic attack, which removed him to Abraham's bosom. Mr. Joseph Benson, who knew him well, closes the account of his life with the following aspiration: "May I follow him as he followed Christ, and, being faithful unto death, receive

with him the crown of life in the kingdom of our Father!"*

Progress of the Welsh Mission work.

The Conference of 1802 added two more Welsh preachers to those already employed speaking that language, namely, Messrs. John Morris and John Jones. There were therefore at this time six labourers engaged in breaking the fallow ground, and sowing the good seed of evangelical truth in the wide and barren field before them; and their labour was not in vain. Many souls were converted to God; and in spite of the opposition with which they everywhere had to contend, the Lord was adding to their numbers daily. Towards the beginning of 1803 they had nearly one thousand members in Society. The work was spreading out not only in Flintshire and Denbighshire, but also in Carmarthenshire and Anglesea; the congregations were large, and the Divine power attended the word.

The rapid progress and substantial fruits of this work deserve special notice. Mr. Owen Davies, in a letter to Dr. Coke, under date of January 14th, 1803, says, "The Gospel has reached them, not in word, but in power. Real conversions daily take place among us. Three hundred and fifty have been added this quarter. Our congregations are large, and the Lord gives us favour in the sight of the people. At Abergele we have a hopeful Society, and have purchased ground to build a chapel. At Conway our friends have made an old building into a very good preaching house. At Carnarvon they have converted the playhouse into a chapel. It is far from being an elegant place, but it will contain four or five hundred hearers." The members in Society, who a short time before were but forty-five, had increased to nine hundred and ninety. "At

* "Methodist Magazine," 1803, p. 296.

Aberfraw in Anglesea we have about fourscore members." The congregations still continued so large that "we have been obliged to preach out of doors till the present time, and probably must continue so to do all the winter. Even when the snow has beat vehemently, the people have disregarded it, and continued on the spot as still as night, till the service was concluded." But these men of God, in the true spirit of the Gospel, were not satisfied with what they saw, but longed for a further extension of the triumphs of grace. Hence the letter before us concludes thus: "Could we extend our labours further to the south, I trust they would not be in vain, as there is a long barren wilderness, from Montgomeryshire through Radnorshire, Glamorganshire, &c., where there is little hope of good being done but through the instrumentality of Welsh preachers. More labourers must be sent into Carnarvonshire and Anglesea next year."

The Irish Mission continued to be prosecuted with zeal and success. The first attention of the missionaries this year was directed to the districts of country where the rebellion had some time before raged with the greatest violence. Messrs. Graham and Ouseley successively passed through the counties of Wicklow, Wexford, Kildare, Carlow, and Kilkenny, and preached the Gospel of Christ in the very streets which had been drenched with human blood. The first visit they paid to the town of Enniscorthy was attended with signal success. Mounted on horses, with their black caps on, they proceeded to the principal streets; crowds gathered around them; the first hymn had a wonderful effect; the word which followed fell with power on the hearts of the people. Some of the blessed fruits of that day's preaching were perceptible a long time afterward. The missionaries say of this journey, "We preached nine-

Success of the Irish missionaries on the scene of the late rebellion.

teen times in the streets of sixteen different towns, and in the houses, both in them and in the country." As might have been expected, the great power of the priests was brought to oppose this good work. They warned and threatened the people against attending preaching, inflicted penances on those who had done so, and on several occasions rode through the congregations, and dispersed as many as possible by a very liberal application of the horsewhip.

Yet notwithstanding all opposition the men of God persevered in their work, in which, indeed, success and persecution were so blended, that they were just able to hold on their way. The following is an instance taken from their account of this journey. "We preached," say they, "in the streets of Wexford; the people were awed into the most uncommon attention, and at night the house was filled, when we had deep attention, and an appearance of much good. In short, the Lord opened our way, till we came to Kilkenny; but here indeed they seemed bent on murdering us in the streets. Brother Graham was not hurt, but I got several bruises; yet they did me no great harm. If we had not turned into the barrack, I suppose we could not have escaped. You would imagine the whole town was in an uproar; such shouting and flinging stones as was fearful to witness. The mayor and the commanding officer came forward, and escorted us out of the town; but they could hardly keep back the rabble. Some of them even went on, and from behind the ditches, after we got away from the town, attempted to stone us again; but they did us no harm, thanks to our God. After our escape we preached again in the streets of Athy, and had a blessed time. The priest is quite mad at his people for hearing us; but they say they will come again." *

* Gideon Ouseley's Life, p. 117.

Mr. Ouseley continues the account of his labours and success:—"I went in company with Mr. Dennin to Cookstown, and had the greatest part of the market people to hear me. At night I preached again to a crowded audience, who seemed much affected. Next morning, from a sense of fatigue, weariness, and hoarseness, I confess I was afraid of the approaching labours of the Sabbath. However, the people crowded from every quarter. Some Catholics came that morning three or four miles to hear. The power of God seemed to reach every heart. Almost the whole congregation, both men and women, were in tears. I hope this seed-time will, through the mercy of Him that waters the furrows of the field, be followed by a glorious harvest. From thence we went to Colzisland, and preached at three o'clock; hundreds came together, among whom were many Catholics. The rain came very heavily upon us about the middle of the discourse, so that we were obliged to adjourn to a large house, and as many as it would contain got in, and then I again resumed my subject. Many cried earnestly for mercy; I trust much good was done. We had another meeting at night, in which I exhorted; and notwithstanding the labours of the day, I found myself much stronger and in better health than I was in the morning. On Monday I came to the Charlemount Circuit. The day was cold and stormy, yet the people came in crowds. The Catholics, some of whom had heard us in the markets, determined to hear us again. I was very feeble, but the power of God was great among the people. We all wept together, while in an open garden I preached from Acts ii. 37: 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' All prejudice seemed to fly away; but the rain prevented us from continuing the meeting. From thence I returned to Red-hill, in the county of Cavan, and

preached in the market of Belly-hays to an attentive multitude, the cry of whom was, ''T is all true;—' t is all true!' The week I stayed in this county I had blessed powerful meetings. At Cloonkee, the people were deeply affected, amongst whom were some Catholics. Most of the inhabitants of that village followed me to Mr. Little's the next Sabbath, and wept sore. Some that had grown careless were again revived. There was a great breaking down in Belturbet on the Sabbath morning: particularly a young man who was a Catholic, and had been in the army, after crying for mercy, stood up and testified that the Lord had in mercy pardoned all his sins."

Renewed persecution in Jamaica.

The progress of the Gospel in the West Indies provoked further persecution. On this occasion Jamaica was again the scene of action. Mr. Williams, a man of colour, a very pious and excellent person, was sent to prison and confined for some time, for singing hymns and praying with Negroes. And Mr. Campbell, a missionary from England, was also imprisoned, on the pretext of his not having obtained a licence on the island. Yet although Mr. Campbell was afterward released from prison, and obtained a licence to preach, the old prosecution was revived, as the enemies to missionary operations pretended to have discovered that he had not only exposed himself to imprisonment, but to a fine of £100, for preaching before he had obtained his licence. He was so persecuted on this account, that he was obliged to leave the island, from whence, indeed, he with difficulty made his escape.

Conversion of Lady Cayley.

It would not be proper to pass through the records of Methodism this year without noticing the remarkable conversion of Lady Cayley, of Brompton Green, Yorkshire, the widow of Sir Thomas Cayley, baronet. She states that she lived until fifty-two years of age "in the usual follies

of the world, in complete ignorance of God and His Christ." She was then deeply convinced of sin while in an assembly room. Her mind was changed in an instant, so that all the scenes by which she was surrounded, and in which she had found pleasure, seemed at once madness and folly. The faultiness of her past life was deeply impressed on her mind. She observes, "If I had cried out, 'What must I do to be saved?' none around me could have answered the inquiry.'" She instantly resolved on an entire change of life, and to seek refuge in a careful perusal of the Bible and in prayer. She also read all the books on divinity which she could obtain, in order to get a knowledge of the way of the Lord. But the more she read, the more her trouble increased; a tempest raged in her breast. Whilst in this state, she paid a visit to her friends in Ireland, and, being there thrown into the company of a serious lady, she mentioned the painful state in which she was, and asked what books she had better read. The lady mentioned Wesley's Sermons: to which she replied rather hastily, "Sermons! I have read sermons till I am sick of them." She was, however, induced to procure these Sermons, and, before she had read the first volume, learned what she had never known before, namely, the way of salvation by faith in Christ. For eight months from the time of her being convinced, this devout lady never felt relieved from a sense of danger, except whilst engaged in prayer. At length the day of deliverance came; she was enabled to believe in Christ, and rose up, rejoicing with unspeakable joy. And twenty-three years afterward, when she wrote the account, she was able to say, "He has never taken from me the abiding witness of His love." After her conversion she found great instruction and blessing in attending religious service at a small chapel about two

miles from her dwelling, which she found to belong to the Methodists, and soon joined the Society, of which she continued an honoured and useful member to her death, a period of about twenty-seven years.

It should be mentioned, as at least a singular fact, that about the year 1780 a pious couple, Thomas and Frances Allen, lived at Brompton, and had Methodist preaching in their house. But, on the death of Thomas, Frances was obliged to remove from the village, at which, and the consequent removal of the preaching from the place, she was so much affected, that, on leaving, she actually knelt down in the street, and prayed that God would raise up some of the Cayley family to bring back the Gospel to Brompton. The poor woman seemed to think that no influence less than that of this wealthy house could accomplish what she so much desired. Her prayer was, however, answered in the conversion of the Lady Cayley, who frequently used to say, that she was converted in answer to Frances Allen's prayer.

Satisfactory state of Methodism.

In closing our record of this year we are led to review the danger, difficulty, and trial to which the Connexion had been exposed from the death of its founder, and the rapid and extensive progress which it had, by the blessing of God, been able to make. It is true, that this success for several years involved the Conference in great financial embarrassment. Yet those who directed its affairs were, under the direction and support of a merciful Providence, equal to the emergency. Crushed, indeed, beneath a weight of debt, they shrank from no call of duty: the West Indies, Wales, and Ireland were provided for, chapels were built, preachers were called out and sustained; all the claims which the cause of God presented were considered, and, to a very great extent, successfully provided for. Although every

Conference from the death of Wesley had been harassed by want of funds, that of 1802 showed that the people had so fully responded to the call of their ministers, that every debt was swept away, and the Connexion enabled to pursue its future course unembarrassed.

The Conference of 1803

The Conference of 1803 was held in Manchester on July 25th. Joseph Bradford was president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The Circuits had now increased in number to 181, being 10 more than last year. The following changes took place:—Castle Donington and Ayr ceased to be Circuits; while Dover, Witney, Camelford, Merthyr Tydvil, Wrexham, Carnarvon, Congleton, Wigan, Grantham, Loughborough, Belper, and Brough, became Circuits. The number of members in the home Circuits was 119,869, being an increase in the year of 259; and the number in Society in British America and the West India Islands was 15,862, being 77 less than the last year. But that year contained a return of 1,159 from Upper Canada, which is altogether omitted this year.

Its transactions.

A few matters of interest are dealt with in these Minutes. The Methodists, as a body, have ever followed their venerated founder in his loyalty to the crown. And they have done this, not in name only, but heartily, and without any reserve, except that imposed by a good conscience. And such a case can scarcely occur, except by a misinterpretation of the law, or a violation of its spirit and meaning: and hence the Methodists, as a body, have always aimed at rendering obedience not merely to the letter of the statutes, but to their meaning and intent. A case of this kind was at this time exhibited. The law had properly and justly, indeed, but liberally, granted to all persons licensed to preach under the provisions of the Toleration Act, exemption from constrained military service and some

public offices. This was just and equitable, placing every minister of religion, having a congregation of souls, on the same footing as regards the civil power. But then Methodist local preachers might obtain such a licence, and, having obtained it, claim such an exemption. Such conduct, however, was regarded by the Methodists generally as inconsistent and unjust:—inconsistent toward the government, who, in excusing ministers separated from civil occupations for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, never contemplated placing in the same category merchants, artisans, or labourers, merely because they statedly or occasionally preached on the Sabbath day. Such conduct would be unjust toward their brethren and neighbours of the same professions or trades; as, in consequence of such exemption, their chance of service would be increased.

London, as the leading Circuit in the Connexion, thought it expedient to moot and settle this question. At the Christmas Quarter Day, 1802, the subject was introduced, when the following preamble and resolutions were agreed upon:—

"It was stated that several private individuals had, in various parts of the kingdom, obtained licences for preaching under the Toleration Act, and had abused the privilege of such licences, by claiming exemption from civil and military offices, to the manifest prejudice of their fellow-citizens, to the injury of the state, and to the great scandal of religion.

"In order, therefore, to repress such practices as much as lies in this meeting, and to prevent improper persons from becoming preachers or teachers, resolved unanimously,—

"1. That if any member of the Methodist Society in this Circuit apply to the Quarter Sessions for a licence to

preach, without being approved as a preacher by the Quarterly Meeting, as expressed by the seventh section of the Large Minutes of the Methodist Conference, printed in 1797, such person shall be expelled the Society.

"2. That if any member of the Methodist Society in this Circuit, who may already have obtained a licence contrary to the last resolution, shall attempt to claim any exemption from offices by virtue of such licence, such person shall be expelled from the Society.

"3. That it is the opinion of this meeting, that the regularly appointed *local preachers,* or persons who preach occasionally, and follow trades and other callings, are a very useful and valuable body of men; but as they are not wholly set apart for the work of the ministry, it is not considered to be consistent with the spirit of the Toleration Act, that they should claim any advantage from the licences in question. This meeting, however, has such confidence in the good sense and uprightness of the local preachers, as to render it unnecessary to pass any penal resolutions with regard to their conduct upon this business.

"4. That the above resolutions be printed in the Methodist Magazine, and circulated generally throughout the Methodist Connexion."

These resolutions were signed by Joseph Benson, chairman, and Joseph Butterworth, secretary to the Quarterly Meeting.

This subject was brought before the Conference by a question, asking its opinion of these resolutions, when they were fully set forth on the Minutes, accompanied by the following judgment:—"We highly approve of these resolutions, and do agree and are determined to adopt them, and enforce them throughout the whole Connexion." *

* Minutes, vol. ii., p. 185.

Committee of Privileges.

Another measure was initiated at this time, which has been of great and permanent service to the Connexion; and, indeed, has been indispensable in many seasons of real and pressing danger. Methodism had now become so widely extended at home and abroad, and its interests were so extensive and diversified, that it was necessary for it to have occasional official intercourse with the national authorities. Not that Methodism, because its members and Societies had increased, aspired to become a political body: on the contrary, perhaps no instance can be found in history of an equal number of persons, so closely linked together in fraternal union, who have in all the stages of their progress so studiously kept aloof from secular political action, as the Methodist body. Yet occasions were frequently occurring which called for the intercourse to which reference has been made. British colonial governments sometimes enacted persecuting statutes, which amounted to an exclusion of the Gospel from great numbers of people. It became necessary for some intelligent and religious agency to point out such iniquitous proceedings to the supreme government. Missionaries had been imprisoned, in defiance of all the dictates of justice, religion, and humanity, until their strength broke down under the infliction, and they sank into premature graves. In such circumstances it became necessary for some body to exist, whose object and duty it should be to interfere in behalf of the victims of oppression, and endeavour to deliver them. And, besides these circumstances, the propriety of watching over the interests of religion in respect of our own national legislation, and the necessity of occasionally defending connexional property by recourse to law, called for some such provision as is indicated above.

This subject was fully considered by this Conference, and the following Minutes give the important result:—"*Q.* How may we guard our religious privileges in these critical times? *A.* A committee of ten shall be formed to attend on this important business, for which committee we nominate the following brethren:—The Rev. Dr. Coke, the Rev. Joseph Benson; the superintendent of the London Circuit for the time being; George Wolff, Esq.; Christopher Sundius, Esq.; Joseph Butterworth, Esq.; Mr. Robert Middleton; Mr. Joseph Bulmer; the general steward for the London Circuit for the time being; and Thomas Thompson, Esq., of Hull. N.B. 1. We appoint Mr. Allan, of London Street, London, our general solicitor. 2. The committee for the purposes above-mentioned are to be annually elected by the Conference.

"*Q.* What direction shall be given in respect of law-suits? *A.* The committee mentioned in the preceding Minutes shall be consulted previously to the commencement of any law-suit, on the part of the whole or any part of the Connexion. And if any law-suit be commenced in future before the above committee be consulted, and their approbation be obtained, the Conference and Connexion at large shall not be responsible for any expenses incurred by such law-suit."

Thirty-five Societies obtained leave to have the sacraments administered in their chapels, in addition to those which previously had that privilege; and consent was given for the erection of thirty-two new chapels. Collections were allowed to be made, within prescribed limits, on behalf of twenty-two chapels which were in need.

It is well known that in the early history of Methodism Mrs. Fletcher, Mrs. Crosby, and other eminently pious and gifted females, were in the habit of exercising their

gifts not only in prayer and exhortation, but frequently in preaching also; and this practice was continued and encouraged by some preachers even till this time, when in the judgment of many of their brethren the necessity of the case, if it had previously existed, had passed away. This led to the mention of the subject in this Conference. The question put was, "Should women be allowed to preach among us?" The following judgment was given in reply:—"We are of opinion that, in general, they ought not. 1. Because a vast majority of our people are opposed to it. 2. Because their preaching does not at all seem necessary, there being a sufficiency of preachers whom God has accredited to supply all the places in our Connexion with regular preaching. But if any woman among us thinks she has an extraordinary call from God to speak in public, (and we are sure it must be an *extraordinary* call that can authorize it,) we are of opinion she should in general address her *own sex*, and *those only*. And upon this condition alone should any woman be permitted to preach in any part of our Connexion; and, when so permitted, it should be under the following regulations:—1. They shall not preach in the Circuit where they reside, until they have obtained the approbation of the superintendent, and a Quarterly Meeting. 2. Before they go into any other Circuit to preach, they shall have a *written* invitation from the superintendent of such Circuit, and a recommendatory note from the superintendent of their own Circuit."

Some complaints are made in the Minutes of this year, as to the defective observance of discipline in some Circuits, and means are recommended for preventing a repetition of the evil in future. A collection was ordered to be made in all the chapels of the Connexion, great and small, in the course of the year, in support of the Missions.

A PLAN

For the PREACHERS in the LONDON CIRCUIT, from OCTOBER 2, to DECEMBER 25, 1803.

1803.	OCTOBER.					NOVEMBER.					DECEMBER.					1803.
	2. Q S C	9. N C	16. N C	23. Q S C	30. N C	6. N C	13. Q S C	20. N C	27. N C		4. Q S C	11. N C	18. N C	25. Q S C		
New-Chapel, 7.	Oates	Lee	Worthington	Dr Hamilton	Blackwell	Story	Cotes	Greenley	Beech		Griffiths	Scarlet	Dr Hamilton	Taylor		New-Chapel, 7.
10.	Benson	Taylor	Bunting	Rhodes	Rutherford	Mole	Benson	Taylor	Bunting		Rhodes	Creighton	Moss	Benson		10.
6.	Hutton L	Dr Whitehead	Myles	Benson	Taylor	Bunting	Rutherford	Rollins	Myles		Benson T	Taylor T	Rutherford	Bunting		6.
Queen-street, 10.	Rhodes	Myles *	Taylor	Bunting	Benson	Rutherford *	Rankin	Myles	Taylor		Dr Hamilton *	Benson T	Bunting	Taylor		Queen-street, 10.
3.	Whitley	Rowley	Worthington	Williams	Bunforth	Tuer	Greenley	Peckham	Dr Hedgecock		Wigfield	Cordeux	Mackie	Tuer		3.
6.	Rhodes	Myles L	Taylor	Rutherford	Benson	Dr Whitehead	Rhodes	Myles	Taylor		Rutherford	Benson T	Bunting	Rhodes		6.
Spitalfields, 10.	Dr Hamilton	Bunting	Moss	Benson	Taylor	Bunting	Rodda	Rhodes	Myles		Benson	Taylor T	Rutherford	Reeves		Spitalfields, 10.
3.	Lecount	Bunforth	Mackie	Taylor	Worthington	Story	Owen	Owen	Whitley		Eddowes	Rodda	Griffiths	Bunforth		3.
6.	Rodda	Creighton *	Dr Hamilton	Rhodes	Rutherford	Myles *	Benson	Taylor	Bunting		Creighton *	Do.	Myles	Dr. Whitehead		6.
Wapping, 10½, and 3½	Bunting	Whitehead	Rhodes	Cordeux	Wigfield	Rankin	Rutherford	Scarlet	Benson		Taylor T	Allan	Story	Bunting		Wapping, 10½, and 3½
	Benson	Taylor	Bunting, L	Creighton	Dr Whitehead	Dr Hedgecock	Myles	Rodda	Taylor				Creighton	Rodda		
Snowsfields, 10½ and 6	Myles	Benson	Rankin	Dore	Rhodes *	Kirby	Bunting	Whitley	Rutherford		Moss	Myles T	Rankin	Williams		Snowsfields, 10½ and 6
	Creighton	Bunting, L	Rutherford	Taylor		Benson	Myles	Dr Hamilton	Creighton		Rhodes		Taylor	Benson *		
Lambeth-Marsh, 10½, 3. & 6.	Wigfield	Rhodes S	Rutherford	Taylor	Rodda	Jackson	Myles, S	Rankin	Wannacott		Lewis	Rutherford S	Taylor	Rhodes		Lambeth-Marsh, 10½, 3. and 6.
	Do.	Allan	Oates	Benson	Worthington	Wonnacott	Tuer	Do.	Taylor		Lee	Blackwell	Lecount	Tuer		
	Myles	Do	Benson L	Dr Hamilton	Rodda	Do	Do	Bunting	Dr Whitehead		Lewis	Rutherford T	Rankin	Story		
Peckham, 5	Bakewell	Jacobs	Rankin	Tuer	Harradine	Oates	Owen	Whitfield	Fosbery		Blackwell	Williams	Jacobs	Stratton		Peckham, 3
Rotherhithe, 11 & 4.	Tuer	Jackson Benson	Whitfield Benson	Allan	Dr Hamilton Sunta	Taylor, L	Owen Bottom	Rutherford S	Whitley Benson		Myles T	Rankin	Whitfield	Scarlet Bunforth A		Rotherhithe, 11 & 4.
Deptford, 10 & 4.	Rutherford S	Rodda	Lewis	Myles, L	Bunting	Rhodes	Taylor	Benson	Hutchinson Rutherford S		Bakewell	Whitfield Wigfield	Rhodes T	Myles S		Deptford, 10 & 4.
Brentford, 10 & 4.	Paramore	Rutherford S	Wagstaff	Rankin	Myles, L	Tuer	Story	Coward	Rhodes S		Bunting T	Griffiths	Cordeux	Wannacott		Brentford, 10 and 3.
Chelsea, 11 & 4.	Fosbery	Greenley	Ellsworth Eddowes	Coward Bennett	Story	Williams Bakewell	Sugden Rankin	Allan	Blackwell Cotes		Prendergast Wannacott	Becket Oughton	Coward Jenkins T	Wigfield		Chelsea, 11 and 3.
Wandsworth 10 & 4.	Whitfield	Rankin S	Stratton	Bakewell	Griffiths	Jacobs	Williams	Rosley, L	Ellsworth		Rotherham	Bunting T	Worthington	Prendergast		Wandsworth, 10 & 4.
	Fosbery	Greenley	Ellsworth	Coward	Becket	Williams	Wigfield	Griffiths	Blackwell		Prendergast	Becket	Lee	Coward		
Mitcham, 11 & 4.	Griffiths	Lecount	Greenley	Oates	Rowley	Turner	Jacobs	Lee	Harradine		Williams	Rotherham	Scarlet T	Fosbery		Mitcham, 11 and 6.
Bromley, 3.	Lee	Stratton	Fosbery	Jacobs	Ellsworth	Harradine	Griffiths	Greenley	Becket		Cordeux T	Turner	Stratton	Jacobs		Bromley, 3.
Barnet, 11 & 4.	Ellsworth	Whitley	Lee	Whitfield	Prendergast	Rotherham	Cordeux	Turner	Rowley		Fosbery	Lecount	Paramore T	Oates		Barnet, 2½ & 6
Poplar, 11 & 4.	Cordeux	Williams	Allan	Greenley	Whitfield, L	Owen	Paramore	Oates	Rankin S		Jacobs	Harradine	Tuer	Allan		Poplar, 11 and 3.
Bow, 11 & 4.	Williams	Story	Becket	Griffiths	Whitley	Mackie	Turner	Worthington	Stratton		Scarlet	Rowley	Allan	Paramore		Bow, 11 & 4½
Stratford, 11 & 4.	Scarlet	Prendergast	Turner	Paramore	Tuer	Whitley	Worthington	Williams	Wigfield		Story	Greenley	Becket	Rowley		Stratford, 11 & 4.
Layton, 6.	Owen	Rotherham	Griffiths	Lee	Stratton	Jackson	Whitfield	Cordeux	Oates		Paramore	Mackie	Greenley	Lecount		Layton, 6.
Greenwich, 10½ and 4.	Taylor Benson	Dr Hamilton Rhodes	Benson Rhodes	Bakewell Tuer	Rankin	Lewis L	Rhodes Cordeux	Bunting Taylor	Allan		Rutherford T Wagstaff	Story	Benson Cordeux	Dr Hamilton Tuer		Greenwich, 10½ and 4.
Rotherhithe, 1	Becket	Whitfield	Owen	Whitley	Wigfield	Rankin	Allan	Harradine	Scarlet		Page	Whitfield T	Bunforth	Scarlet		Rotherhithe, 1
Kennington, 10½	Page	Tuer	Currie	Worthington	Fosbery	Rowley	Blackwell	Prendergast	Lecount		Oates	Currie	Ellsworth	Lee		Kennington, 6.
Barking, 6.	Harradine	Oates	Blackwell	Stratton	Cordeux	Greenley	Lee	Jacobs	Whitfield		Rowley	Whitley T	Rotherham	Griffiths		Barking, 6.
Tottenham, 11 & 4.	Blackwell	Scarlet	Lecount	Story	Turner	Stratton	Oates	Rotherham	Worthington		Whitfield	Prendergast	Williams	Greenley		Tottenham, 11 and 3.
Saffron-Hill	Currie 6	Owen 10½	Bunforth 3	Blackwell 6	Greenley, 10½	Lecount, 3	Page 6	Mackie 10½	Turner 3		Becket 6	Wannacott 10½	Rowley 3	Currie 6		Saffron-Hill,
Hoxton, 10½	Prendergast	Cordeux	Rodda	Rowley	Scarlet	Worthington	Lecount	Story	Bunforth		Rankin	Wigfield	Whitley	Rodda	Hoxton, 10½	
3	Do	Do	Page	Do	Do	Do	Do	Becket	Cordeux		Tuer	Do.	Do.	Do	3	
6.	Story	Mackie	Rodda	Turner	Paramore	Currie	Dr. Hamilton	Do	Do.		Rankin	Worthington	Blackwell	Dr. Hamilton	6	
Twickenham, 11 & 4.	Rankin S	Rankin Paramore	Rowley L	Scarlet	Rotherham	Cordeux	Coward	Bunforth	Tuer		Whitley	Rhodes T	Turner	Worthington	Twickenham, 11 & 4.	
Chiswick near Turnham-Green,	Greenley	Kingsmill	Paramore	Harradine	Ealand	Scarlet	Jenkins	Rotherham	Ealand		Greenley	Jenkins	Kingsmill	Rotherham	Chiswick near Turnham-Green,	
Hammersmith 11 & 4.	Coward	Worthington	Rotherham	Ellsworth	Page	Wigfield	Rowley	Paramore	Coward		Turner	Fosbery	Owen	Cordeux	Hammersmith, 11 and 3.	
Somers-Town	Worthington	Currie	Whitley	Lecount	Lee	Griffiths	Becket	Blackwell	Story		Owen	Oates	Page	Ellsworth	Somers-Town	

The Preachers Meeting will be on Wednesday, Dec. 28, at the New-Chapel, at Three o'Clock; and the Quarterly Meeting on Thursday, Dec. 29, at Two o'Clock

N B. N stands for Sacrament, and L for Love-Feast. Where this mark * is found, the Rev. Mr Creighton will attend to administer the Sacrament.

[Price 1 at the Conference Office, North-Green, Worship-Street, London. [illegible]

It is very desirable to give a clear exhibition from time to time of the progress of Methodism, and of its mode of action. Without some particular information of this kind, general readers will form no conception of the religious apparatus which it provided for the instruction and salvation of the people; and the Methodists of the present day may well look with astonishment at the magnitude of the Circuits, and the range of operations which were then carried on in them. For the purpose of showing something of this, we present the reader with a Plan of the London Circuit for the last three months of 1803; from which it will be seen that this portion of Methodist labour extended from Twickenham to Tilbury, about thirty-eight miles; and from Mitcham to Barnet, nearly twenty miles.

Two more Welsh missionary preachers were now added to those previously engaged in that work: Thomas Roberts of Bangor, and William Jones of Llanilidan. This field of labour was consequently divided into three Circuits, and the preachers distributed as follows:—Ruthin: Owen Davies, Edward Jones, John Maurice, John Jones, Thomas Roberts. Carnarvon: John Hughes, William Jones. Liverpool: John Bryan, Welsh missionary. This same year the new District, called the New North Wales District, was formed, comprising Wrexham, Ruthin, and Carnarvon Circuits; Mr. Owen Davies being appointed chairman. Up to this time the Welsh preachers were connected with the Chester District.

Success of the Welsh Mission.

The prosperity which had previously crowned these evangelical labours was not only continued, but rendered more abundant with the increase of labourers. Toward the end of April, 1804, Mr. Davies informed Dr. Coke, "that the work was progressing favourably, that the

increase of the preceding quarter was upwards of two hundred members, and that the Welsh cause continued to improve in Liverpool."

About this time, two of the Welsh local preachers removed to Manchester to reside; and finding many Welsh people there, they procured a room, opened it for preaching, and began a little Society. They then wrote to Mr. Davies, earnestly desiring the assistance of a Welsh minister: he had none that could be spared, but was led to pray that the Lord would send labourers into His harvest. The rapid increase of Welsh preachers was indeed very remarkable, yet not sufficient to keep pace with the cry for the Gospel in that language.

Mr. Davies declared the success which attended these labours to be most extensive, both in the conversion of sinners and in the edification of believers; so much so, that demands for increased accommodation became general. In the communication above referred to, Mr. Davies stated that a friend at Pwllheli had just bought ground to build a chapel, for which £60 had been given; and that he himself had given £100 for another plot at Carnarvon, and had since begged £60 toward paying for it. Nor were the children neglected in the religious care of the adult population; Sunday schools were opened, and taught principally by members of the Society; that at Ruthin, at this time, had about two hundred scholars. Another great impulse was given to Welsh Methodism this year, by the preparation and publication by Mr. John Hughes of the Welsh Hymn Book. In the state in which it then appeared, it confessedly had many and serious imperfections; yet, with all these, it was rendered a great blessing.

On the 24th of May, the first Welsh District Meeting was

held in the town of Denbigh, when the following preachers were present:—Owen Davies, John Hughes, Edward Jones, James Gartrell, John Maurice, John Jones, Stephen Games, Edward Linel, William Jones, George Lowe, and Robert Roberts. The North Wales District, at this time, comprised both the English Circuits of Welshpool and Wrexham, as well as the Welsh Circuits: this accounts for the presence of the English preachers. Prior to this the Welsh cause at Ruthin was attached to the Chester District; and Welshpool to the Wales, now the South Wales, District. Wrexham and Carnarvon were constituted Circuits this year.

George Lowe at Wrexham.

It will be seen from the above, that George Lowe attended the North Wales District Meeting this year. He had been appointed by the preceding Conference to the newly-formed Circuit of Wrexham. There he found indications of stability and prosperity which cheered his heart; but the chapel was inconveniently small, and many difficulties stood in the way of procuring a larger one: but as there were considerable life, unanimity, and energy in the Society, it was attempted, and upon a scale which many persons thought extravagant; for it was predicted that it must have, for many years, a desolate appearance, as no sufficient congregation could be collected to fill it. These prognostications, however, proved baseless. No sooner was the building completed than it was filled with an attentive congregation, many persons, who had previously attended no place of worship, becoming regular pewholders; and, what is still more important, numbers were awakened, converted to God, and added to the Society.

Congleton was also one of the Circuits formed this year, and its state shows very clearly the great difficulties which opposed the multiplication of Circuits at this time, and the

The difficulties of Methodist progress shown in the case of Congleton.

important advantages which resulted when these were fairly overcome. The Societies with which this Circuit was commenced, were situated at the extreme ends of the Chester and Macclesfield Circuits, with about ten miles of unoccupied ground between them. As these Societies were located so far from the centres of those Circuits, as to render their supply a work of great difficulty, there was the most slender prospect possible of the intermediate space ever receiving adequate religious cultivation. But when such Societies were formed into a Circuit, (it can scarcely be said, united,) much difficulty must have been felt as to making suitable arrangements for carrying on the work with efficiency. Yet these difficulties were encountered and subdued. Three years afterward, some lovely Societies were raised up in the intermediate country, and the cheering report was made, "We have happily united the two ends." *

Jonathan Saville local preacher at Halifax.

In the course of this year Jonathan Saville was called to the office of a local preacher in the Halifax Circuit. The mention of such a circumstance in this place indicates that there must have been something remarkable in the history of this person: the following brief sketch will justify the supposition. Jonathan was the son of poor but industrious parents in the parish of Bradford, Yorkshire. He was only three years of age, when his pious mother died,—a calamity which deeply affected his future life. When about seven years of age, he was removed from the penury of his father's cottage to the poor-house. Here he remained but a little while, the overseers being determined, in spite of the remonstrances of his poor father, to put him out as an apprentice. The person to whom he was first apprenticed is not known. Jonathan remained with him but a very short time, and was then transferred to a man who had the

His history.

* Rev. J. B. Dyson's "Methodism in the Congleton Circuit," p. 122.

working of several coal mines in the neighbourhood. Here he was brutally treated, and so cruelly overworked, that he sank beneath the hardships to which he was exposed; and his master was glad to remove him from this drudgery, lest more serious consequences might follow. "When he took me from the coal-pit," said Jonathan afterwards, "my strength was quite gone, I was more dead than alive, and my soul was sick within me." He was now kept at home, and employed at the spinning-wheel, when his health and spirits in some measure returned. But alas! this was to continue for a very short season. While sitting at his spinning-wheel, in his usual place,—the passage of the house,—the cold wind whistled through it with piercing effect on poor Jonathan; he shivered from the keenness of the northern blast, and worked his wheel with redoubled velocity; but in vain,—his fingers grew stiff, and, able to endure no longer, he determined to dare all consequences, and go to the fire to warm himself. While there, his master's daughter came in; poor Jonathan apprehended danger, but persevered in thawing his fingers; but his fears were realized. The brutal young woman not only pushed him from the fire, but struck him a blow, which knocked him on the floor with such violence, that his thigh bone was broken by the fall. For a while he lay on the floor in agony, and then literally crawled to his bed on the same floor, where he lay in the most excruciating pain. Meanwhile his master returned, and, having been informed that he was gone sulky to bed, he went to him, and, with terrible threats, ordered him to his wheel. The poor lad actually tumbled off the bed, and, having vainly attempted to stand with the aid of a chair, fell on the floor. Yet his master, unmoved by his cries or evident suffering, dragged him

along the floor to the wheel, and forced him to sit and spin the rest of the day. It may seem incredible, but this conduct was continued. Though the master well knew the state of the boy's limb, no surgeon was sent for to set it; he was compelled to work; and used, as he lay in bed at night, to hold the broken bone with his hands as nearly in its place as possible. That he did not die under such treatment is really wonderful. In those circumstances, his recovery was protracted and tedious: indeed, he was never fully delivered from the consequences of this cruelty; it followed him in its effects through life. Jonathan spent three or four years under this inhospitable roof, until at length his master, weary of his charge, applied to the overseers to be relieved; and, they saying that such a poor cripple was fit for no place but the workhouse, Jonathan was once more received within its walls.

Happily the master of the workhouse at this time was a kind-hearted man, and interested himself in favour of the poor lad, who in such altered circumstances, with nutritious diet and frequent cold bathing, was soon restored to health, although with a permanently deformed and diminutive body. One of the old inmates of the workhouse taught him to read; and, having a great thirst for knowledge, Jonathan eagerly acquired all that his poor preceptor could impart. Having now recovered his health, he gladly laboured beyond the usual hours, and thus earned a small pittance, which, with such aid as he received from those who pitied his misfortunes, enabled him for a while to attend an evening school, where he learned to write a fair hand, and cast accounts.

As soon as Jonathan could walk without a crutch, he longed to learn some means of earning his bread. His

case was known to a pious Methodist leader, he being the parish overseer at the time. He took Jonathan into his house, and taught him the business of a warper. Here, also, he was favoured with the means of grace. Being now able to provide for his own maintenance, he engaged himself as a warper in a manufactory near Halifax, and resided in that town. There he was brought to God under the ministry of Mr. Benson, united himself to the Methodist Society, became a new man, and started on a long career of piety and usefulness. As a prayer-leader, he was very successful; travelling in all weathers over bleak hills, he sought out people for whom no man cared, and led them to the throne of grace. One who knew him intimately affirms, "It is not too much to say, that no man living in the district (the neighbourhood of Halifax) has been in labours more abundant." After labouring thus as a prayer-leader fourteen years, he was appointed the leader of a Class,—a charge which he took not without fear and trembling, and not without a renewed act of self-dedication to God. In 1803, when forty-three years of age, he, at the request of the superintendent and Society, reluctantly consented to act as a local preacher. The result justified their judgment, and refuted his misgivings. He almost immediately became highly and deservedly popular, and sustained this popularity throughout his lengthened course of labour. Hundreds in Halifax and the neighbouring Circuits will never forget his solemn admonitions, his impressive cautions, his appropriate and original ideas. His talents eminently fitted him for the missionary platform; and there, perhaps, he shone to the best advantage, delivering speeches to which the most eminent ministers listened with satisfaction, and which they remember with pleasure.* How marvel-

Conversion, piety, and usefulness.

* WALKER'S "Methodism in Halifax."

lous are the ways of God! Who would have thought, from the early years of Jonathan Saville, that his life would be crowned with such happiness, usefulness, and honour? *

Methodism still sustained its usual portion of literary opposition, which came now mainly from Ireland. Amongst the first attacks upon it was a pamphlet by the Rev. John Walker, Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, in which he most severely condemns Methodism and the Methodists; but his allegations possessed no novelty. They were precisely what had been urged against the system by Toplady, Hill, Berridge, and others, and had been many times confuted. Alexander Knox, Esq., wrote the author a letter explaining the subject, and objecting to the views put forward in the pamphlet. Mr. Walker's effusion scarcely merits notice. He was soon afterwards expelled from his fellowship for writing against the character and ritual of his own Church.

Methodism opposed by Dr. William Hales.

The other censor of Methodism who now appeared, was a much more respectable and formidable opponent,—William Hales, D.D., rector of Killesandra. He was a man of learning, and the author of some very valuable and much esteemed works on chronology and ecclesiastical antiquities. But he understood these subjects much better than he understood the operation of the Spirit of God on the human heart, or the simple preaching of Christ crucified as the sinner's hope. That which specially provoked the ire of this Protestant doctor of divinity, appears to have been the conduct of the Irish missionaries in preaching the doctrines of the Gospel as held by Methodists, on horseback, at fairs and markets, in streets and highways. These

* For a full and very interesting account of this extraordinary man, see "Memoirs of Jonathan Saville. By the Rev. F. A. West." Fourth Edition. London: J. Mason.

practices he severely condemned. And what is still more strange, the "Christian Observer," a respectable and religious English periodical, to a very great extent endorsed these censures, and supported the unjust judgment which the doctor had pronounced.

Mr. Benson replied to the strictures of Dr. Hales, and the critique of the Review, in a pamphlet under the title of, "The Inspector of Methodism inspected, and the Christian Observer observed." In this publication he showed in a clear and convincing light the soundness of the doctrines which were thus unjustly impugned, and the scriptural character of the conduct so hastily condemned; at the same time the principles of these censors are demonstrated to be as defective and unsound, as their censures are proved to be unmerited and unjust. Dr. Hales, in this instance, added another to the long list of persons, both before and since his day, who have undertaken to censure Methodist doctrine and practice without understanding these subjects.

Dr. Coke's ninth voyage to America.

Dr. Coke sailed from London in the autumn of 1803, for his ninth voyage to the western world; but he either kept no journal of his travels on this occasion, or it is lost; we have no information as to his route or his labours. He on that occasion took a final leave of the American continent; and did not return to England until several months had elapsed in the year 1804.

The Conference of 1804.

The Conference of 1804 began in London on July 30th. Henry Moore was president, and Dr. Coke secretary. Thirty-nine preachers, including six for Ireland, were at this time received on trial. The number of Circuits had now reached 192, being an increase of 12 on the year. The following changes were made:—Brackley, Barrow, and the Isle of Man, ceased to be reckoned as Circuits; while Banbury, Downend, Bodmin, Denbigh, Beaumaris,

Wolverhampton, Newcastle-under-Lyne, Bury, Winterton, Douglas, Peel, Ayr, Cookstown, and Lurgan, became Circuits. The number of members in Great Britain and Ireland was at this time 120,042, being an increase of 173; and in British America and the West Indies, 15,796, a decrease of 66. Leave was given at this Conference for the erection of forty new chapels, and for affording connexional aid, either by means of private applications or public subscriptions, within certain limits, for twenty-four other chapels, which were in needy circumstances. Only three preachers were left on the president's list of reserve, to supply any vacancies occurring throughout the Connexion in the course of the current year by sickness or death.

Its transactions.

The first Missionary Committee.

This Conference is memorable for having originated the first Methodist Missionary Committee. The various operations of the several missionaries, fostered and directed by the indefatigable Dr. Coke, had resulted in such success as to require further and more systematic arrangements for their government and support. Measures having this tendency were now initiated. The question was put, "What regulations are made respecting the Missions?" The answer comprised the following particulars:—

"1. Dr. Coke is re-appointed to the office of general superintendent of all our Missions.

"2. A Committee of finance and advice is appointed, consisting of all the preachers stationed in London.

"3. Dr. Coke is appointed president of this Committee, Mr. Entwisle the secretary, and Mr. Lomas the treasurer, for the ensuing year.

"4. All official letters and communications whatever from the missionaries shall be laid from time to time before the Committee, and their advice taken upon the same.

"5. If any difference of opinion should arise between the general superintendent and the majority of the Committee, concerning any important measure, both parties shall have the privilege of appealing to the Conference; but if, in such case, an immediate decision be necessary, the right thereof must of course remain with the general superintendent till the ensuing Conference.

"6. A public collection for the Missions shall be made in all our congregations in every Circuit of Great Britain, after the manner of the Kingswood collection; and these moneys shall be transmitted to Mr. Lomas as soon as possible, but at farthest before Christmas.

"7. A regular annual account of all the receipts and disbursements shall be published by the secretary.

"8. An account of the spiritual state of the Missions shall be drawn up by Dr. Coke, and published, if approved of by the Committee."

These arrangements were an important step towards organization. They did not fully meet the case, but afforded a considerable contribution toward it, and a basis for further improvement. Indeed, this measure was thoroughly Methodist in its character;—it did not aim at finality, but progress.

Improved arrangements were also made for conducting the business of the Book Room: the most important of these was the adoption of the sound principle, that no sums should be taken from that concern for the aid of the general work, beyond the amount of the cash balance in hand year by year.

Two years were fixed by this Conference as the longest term which any preacher could remain in one Circuit. The Committee of Privileges was re-appointed.

In the list of the newly-made Circuits at this Confer-

ence, we find that of Bury. This event led to the election of Mr. James Wrigley, of Gigg, near Bury, as steward of the new Circuit,—an office which he filled with great advantage to the Societies in that locality for upwards of twenty years. His liberality and zealous exertions led, some time afterward, to the erection of a new and very commodious chapel in that town.

Mr. Adam Clarke continued still in Manchester, discharging the duties of a Methodist preacher with great energy, ability, and success; and, in addition thereto, he published a new edition of Fleury's "Manners and Customs of the Ancient Israelites," &c. This was, at that time especially, very useful. The antiquities of sacred history, and the leading peculiarities which distinguished the ancient elect people, had been but partially studied; and, so far as this had been done, the results of such researches were mostly locked up in foreign languages or in huge folios. The contribution therefore, by Mr. Clarke, of this useful work, in a popular form and readable style, was a great boon to the Scripture-reading portion of society: a fact clearly attested by the rapid sale of the work. In addition to the preceding, Mr. Clarke, in the course of this year also, published a very useful tract, entitled, "A succinct Account of the principal Editions of the Greek Testament," &c., to which were added observations on the text of the "Three Witnesses," with a plate. This pamphlet, also, although its utility was limited to a smaller class, was adapted to afford important facilities to earnest biblical students.

Dr. Coke, having returned to England from his last visit to America, and taken part in the labours of the Conference, directed his energetic attention to the dearest object of his heart,—the Mission work; and, finding everything going on prosperously in other quarters, he thought he

might now do something to respond to the earnest applications which he had often received from Gibraltar. The occasion of this has been already briefly mentioned. A regiment containing many pious soldiers, members of the Methodist Society, two or three of whom were leaders or local preachers, had been for some years stationed at this garrison; and they had written to the doctor, earnestly requesting that he would send a preacher to a place which they described as a most promising field of usefulness. Previously he had been unable to help them, but now he saw his way to afford them aid. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1804, Mr. M'Mullen was sent there as a missionary, accompanied by his wife and a daughter six years old. Their voyage was long and dangerous; but storms and contrary winds were to this family but the beginning of sorrows. After having been driven on the Barbary coast, and placed in great danger, they reached Gibraltar about the end of September, but found on their arrival that the yellow fever was raging among all ranks with unexampled violence. All things were in confusion. Consternation everywhere prevailed. The report of death was heard in almost every dwelling, and all faces were covered with horror.

A missionary sent to Gibraltar.

"The child was taken ill almost immediately on their arrival, but survived the disease. On the first of October Mr. M'Mullen wrote a letter to England, describing the calamities of their condition. With the same fatal disease he was seized on the tenth, and on the eighteenth he was a lifeless corpse. At the time of his decease his wife felt symptoms of the same disorder; and, after lingering a little longer than her husband, followed him to the world of spirits, and to the house appointed for all living; leaving their surviving orphan in the hands of strangers, in the

The melancholy result.

midst of pestilence in a foreign land."* The child was sent back to England by the first opportunity, and officially consigned to the protection of Dr. Coke. By him she was transferred to the fatherly kindness of Dr. Clarke, with whose daughters she was educated,—some property left by her father being available for that purpose. She grew up under this fostering care, and was in 1819 married to the late Rev. John Rigg, and still lives, esteemed and respected as his widow and the mother of the Rev. J. H. Rigg. But the disasters above recorded seriously delayed the ministerial aid intended for Gibraltar. It was not till some years afterward that the effort was renewed.

The great zeal and liberality of Dr. Coke.

The Methodists of the present and future generations ought to know more than it is now possible for them to be told, of the generous devotion and great Christian liberality of Dr. Coke. It is, indeed, known that he devoted himself in life and labours to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom with an ardour and zeal scarcely exceeded by Wesley himself; but no adequate conception obtains as to how much he begged for, or how much he gave to, the great work of Christian Missions; nor can it ever be known. His biographer says, "His property, like his time and life, was at the service of the Missions; and to supply deficiencies in the collections which he made, as well as to assist the Societies in foreign parts in completing the chapels which they found it necessary to build, he expended the whole of his patrimonial inheritance. His example and his precepts therefore associated in the appeals which he made; and God, in both, was pleased to repay his confidence, even in this life, with an ample remuneration." †

But perhaps nothing that he did showed such real posi-

* Drew's "Life of Dr. Coke," p. 317. † *Ibid.*, p. 317.

tive and continued sacrifice as his persevering appeals, in public and private, for subscriptions toward the Missions. Not only did he go from county to county, and from town to town, preaching and making appeals from the pulpit on behalf of this good cause; he also went from door to door! In his day most of those best able to give were not so attracted by a sermon on behalf of Missions as to crowd a chapel. They had to be sought out, to have the case urged on them; and this Dr. Coke did. Sometimes he was coldly received, occasionally rudely repulsed; more than once was he called a vagrant, and threatened with a vagrant's fate; and in such circumstances, with mingled mildness and majesty, he had more than once to shake off the dust from his feet in solemn protest against unchristian insolence. Yet, although occasionally so harshly treated, the doctor was generally very successful, and raised for many years a large portion of the supplies which supported the Missions. In one respect at least Providence blessed him, as he was engaged in this work, beyond his hopes. The incident is as follows.

Whilst travelling on one of these begging excursions, he came, in the early part of 1805, to Bristol. There consulting with Mr. Pawson as to his best means of canvassing the city, he was strongly urged to call on a Miss Smith, a lady who was at once generous and rich, but who was indisposed, and was then at the Hot-wells for the recovery of her health. In company with Mr. Pawson he did call on the lady, and, having stated the object of his visit, Miss Smith, with evident pleasure in her countenance, immediately subscribed one hundred guineas; telling him at the same time, that just then she had no money to spare, but that she was about almost immediately to return to her house at Bradford, Wilts, and that if he would call on her

there, the subscription should be paid. She then invited him with Mr. and Mrs. Pawson to dine with her, which they did, and found her soul truly alive to God. Such was Dr. Coke's first interview with Miss Smith, as given by himself.

The doctor was filled with admiration at the amount of this gift, and equally so with the manner in which it was given; while the lady's Christian temper, sense, and piety, when he dined with her, so won upon him, that he began to entertain the thought that she would make a very suitable companion for him. This thought was fully confirmed when he visited her at Bradford, and she made her subscription two hundred guineas instead of one. From this time an acquaintance began which led to their marriage in the course of the year. This lady, prior to her marriage, had lived a very secluded life. She was the only surviving child of Joseph Smith, Esq., an eminent solicitor, of Bradford in Wiltshire, who at his death left her an ample fortune.

His marriage.

In marking the progress of a Christian body like the Methodist Connexion, for the purpose of ascertaining and perpetuating a knowledge of the spirit in which its movements were directed, and the general character of its practice, it is absolutely necessary occasionally to notice circumstances very unimportant, even trivial in themselves, but which nevertheless serve to illustrate the subject, and sometimes to cast much light on the motives and conduct of parties. Few religious bodies have had more to do with controversy than the Methodists. While asserting what they believe to be the simple truths of the Gospel according to the Scriptures, they have been assailed and opposed on every side; and they have never been deficient in men able to meet every adversary, and to maintain their views of Divine truth. But they have never courted controversy. If a rash individual has at any time

indulged in conduct of this kind, he has evinced a spirit alien from that of the body. Methodists have always been willing to extend the right hand of fellowship to all who hold the essential doctrines of Christianity,—unwilling to allow unimportant non-essentials to interfere with the Christian harmony with which religious bodies should proceed in carrying on their great struggle against the wickedness and darkness of this world.

Mr. Benson, who was appointed sole editor of the Methodist Magazine by the Conference of 1803, was a fine exemplification of these principles. Prepared to meet every enemy, he deprecated controversy with evangelical Christians. This is fully manifest from the following extract from his journal: "May 2nd, 1804.—A very unfair 'Account of Arminianism' having been inserted in the Evangelical Magazine for May, I this day wrote to the editor of that publication, and sent him for insertion a very different and, I think, very just account of that doctrine, taken from Gerard Brandt's History of the Synod of Dort. I have told him that I should be sorry to see the dying embers of controversy revived, or the two periodical publications—the Evangelical and the Methodist Magazines—made the vehicles of strife and contention; yet, that if such articles are inserted in the Evangelical Magazine as that here referred to, controversy is inevitable, as we neither distrust the goodness of our cause, nor fear the want of materials for its defence." *

Since the eminently pious and useful John Fletcher had passed away to his reward, several notices of his labours and character had appeared in print. Wesley had published a narrative of his life; Mrs. Fletcher, an account of his death and character; and the Rev. Mr. Gilpin had referred to him at length in his notes in the "Portrait of St. Paul."

* MACDONALD'S "Life of Benson," p. 397.

But neither of these—nor, indeed, all of them united—was regarded as affording such a full and connected biography of this eminently good man, as was worthy of his character, and required by the church. At the instance of Mrs. Fletcher, therefore, the Conference of 1801 requested Mr. Benson to prepare for publication a suitable Life of the Rev. John Fletcher. With this request he complied, and it was now carried into effect. The execution of this work is all that might have been expected from the high qualifications of the author. Intimately acquainted as he had been with the subject of his narrative, fully conversant with those great elements of the Christian faith which he so ably defended, as well as qualified by deep and enlightened piety to appreciate his holy religious experience, Mr. Benson produced a Life of Fletcher worthy of that eminent minister, and adapted to perpetuate in the church a knowledge of his character and usefulness.

Benson's Life of Fletcher.

Labours and success of the Irish missionaries.

The Irish missionaries were this year favoured to pursue their course of pious toil without much opposition. Messrs. Graham and Ouseley first passed through the counties of Wicklow and Wexford, preaching in their usual manner with acceptance and success. Mr. Ouseley, referring to this period, says, "I heard of a few Catholics over here who were stirred up to read the Bible. I hope the little hand will become a great cloud. A few days ago I was talking to a lady from the county of Kerry, a part that we only visited once, and that about two-and-a-half years since: she told me of two Catholics near the little village she lived in, who had turned from Popery when we were there: one a poor man; he is happy in God, and bears up against a flood of persecution; the other, a gentleman, is now a constant churchman, though not so pious as the poor man." After this tour through Wicklow

and Wexford, they went on to Carlow, Kilkenny, &c., where they appear to have been received kindly by clergy and laity. Mr. Lanktree, the Irish minister, writing in October, says, "We were now visited by the Irish missionaries, Graham and Ouseley. Their preaching in the colliery was attended with the power of God; prejudice and opposition were borne down by the influence of truth and love. In Carlow, whilst they preached in the street and chapel, the word of life was blessedly triumphant. After I had read and explained the rules of our Society, and invited those who were convinced of sin to meet on trial, twenty persons gave in their names for that purpose. In Kilkenny, where the missionaries were formerly ill-treated, they were now honoured."

"The first person who attempted disturbance was ordered into confinement by Mr. Edmuns, the mayor. The pious clergy and church people magnified the grace of God in His servants, who preached in public and private, enjoying the most ample protection, whilst 'the word of the Lord had free course, and was glorified.' After their departure, a vestry meeting was held in St. Mary's church, when thanks were voted to the mayor for his manly and Christian conduct on this occasion." This was afterwards inserted in the newspapers. Thus these devoted men continued labouring, journeying from place to place, throughout the year. A letter from Mr. Ouseley to Mr. Entwisle, secretary for the Missions, written in the latter part of May, 1805, says, "We have returned from the country to rest a little. We had much preaching in the streets, these five weeks past. This is a fine time to be preaching among the Roman Catholics; they are still increasing in numbers, and in apparent good-will to hear us. I have had a letter from a town I had been in, and one from another little village. That from the former

says, the Society increased ten or twelve after I left them; six of whom were Romanists. In the latter place, thirty had joined the morning I left it; two were Romanists: the letter from it says, there is a great revival, and they are doing well. In another town, Carrick-on-Shannon, (county of Leitrim,) twenty-one joined the last morning I preached there. Brother Graham was then in Boyle. In short, I can truly say the Lord was with us in all the towns, streets, and markets, and do hope much good is done." *

The preaching of these faithful men was attended everywhere with like gracious results. In many instances the Romish clergy themselves mixed with the listening multitudes, and heard in silent wonder the word of the Lord; and when any of them interposed, as they sometimes did, to excite a lawless rabble against these men of God, and to disperse their congregations, though they occasionally succeeded in their designs, yet frequently their schemes were as impotent as they were wicked, and utterly failed to prevent their ignorant flocks from hearing, in their own loved language, the truth as it is in Jesus.

Mr. Bramwell at Hull.

Mr. Bramwell was appointed to the Hull Circuit by the Conference of 1804, with Messrs. Walter Griffith and Samuel Taylor for colleagues. Here the labours of these ministers were followed by great success. In two years the Societies increased four hundred and fifty members. Indeed, this pious minister could scarcely live without witnessing signs of religious prosperity. An extract from a letter of his, dated, "October, 1804," shows the bent of his mind:—"I have had three weeks of agony, but now see the Lord working. I have not preached lately without seeing some fruit of my labour. The Lord is saving souls! Pray, pray much for me!"

* "Memoir of Rev. Gideon Ouseley," p. 123.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM THE CONFERENCE OF 1805 TO THAT OF 1809.

THE Conference of 1805—Its Transactions—Financial Difficulties, and their Cause—Conference Towns—Literary Persecution of Methodism—"Annual Review."—Le Mesurier's Visitation Sermon—Nott's Bampton Lecture—Revival of Religion in Bradford—Progress of the Irish Mission—Religious Prosperity in the Keighley Circuit—Dr. Coke projects a Plan for Home Missions in England—The Conference of 1806—Obituary of Preachers: John Crook, John Pawson, and Thomas Rutherford—Expulsion of Joseph Cooke—The Controversy to which it led—Great Ability displayed by Mr. Edward Hare—Dr. Coke's Home Missionary Plan brought into Operation—Decision of the Conference to adopt legal Measures for the Recovery of Brighouse Chapel—The long Delay, but ultimate Success of the Suit—Methodist Co-operation in the Formation and Progress of the British and Foreign Bible Society—Dr. Coke's Commentary completed and published—The Provision made for the Preachers still miserably deficient in some Circuits—Success of the Ministry at Rochester—Wickedness of Nightingale's "Portraiture of Methodism"—Repentance and Death of its Author—The Christian Advocate's Attack on Methodism—His serious Error—The Conference of 1807—Its Transactions—Obituary of Preachers: John Cricket, James Rogers—Adam Clarke re-appointed to London at the special Request of the Bible Society—Dr. Clarke engaged by the Government Commissioners to continue the Collection of State Papers known as "Rymer's *Fœdera*"—Nature and Object of this Work—His steady Attention to his ministerial Duties amid his severe literary Labours—A. E. Farrar's Labours and Trials as a Missionary to Holderness—The painful Exercises and Persecutions to which he was subjected—Mr. Joseph Marsh at Ulverstone—Progress of Religion among pious Soldiers at the Cape of Good Hope—Misrepresentations in the Hibernian Society's Report lead to a fuller Statement of Methodist Progress in Ireland—The Conference of 1808—Its Transactions—Dr. Clarke Librarian of the Surrey Institution—Persecution revived in Jamaica—And again forbidden by the King in Council—Striking Instance

of a Sinner's Salvation by Faith in Contrast with Pharisaism—Pitiable Condition of worn-out Methodist Preachers—Piety of George Lowe in old Age, and providential Interposition in his Behalf.

The Conference of 1805.

THE Conference of 1805 was held at Sheffield, beginning on July 29th. Dr. Coke was elected president for the second time, and Joseph Benson secretary. The number of the Circuits at this time was 194, being an increase of only two over last year; yet the following rather considerable number of changes was made:—Poole, Wigan, Stockton, Ayr, Skibbereen, Youghal, Birr, and Tullamore ceased to be Circuits; while Wisbeach, Weymouth, Kington, Carmarthen, Kendal, Dumfries, Darlington, Walsingham, Oldcastle, and Athlone were made Circuits. The number of Irish missionaries was now increased to eight, two being appointed to each of the following districts, and the country adjacent to each respectively:—The Dublin and Cork Districts, the Limerick and Athlone Districts, the Belfast and Newry Districts, and the Londonderry District. The number of members in the Societies of Great Britain and Ireland was 125,236, an increase of 5,194; in British America and the West Indies, 15,308, a decrease of 486. Leave was given for the erection of fifty-seven new chapels, and collections were ordered to be made, within certain prescribed limits, for twenty-seven chapels found in needy circumstances.

Its transactions.

A series of standing orders for the expediting and better conducting of the business of the Conference was prepared and published in these Minutes, under the title of "New Rules and Regulations." Further directions were also given respecting the business of the Stationing Committee. Particular attention was directed to the examination of candidates for the ministry, especially in regard to their theological opinions. Several regulations were also enacted respecting

singing in public worship. All instruments of music were prohibited, except a bass viol, which was permitted when the principal singer required it. No hymn-books were allowed to be used but those published at the Book Room. All *pieces* in which *recitatives, solos, fuguing,* are introduced, were positively prohibited. The original grave, simple, and devotional style of music was enjoined to be carefully preserved, which is stated to be admirably adapted to draw off the attention from the singing and the singers, and "to raise the soul to God only." Musical festivals were entirely forbidden; and every preacher was solemnly held responsible, as "accountable to God" for all that is done in the chapel, during the times that he is in possession of the pulpit. And it is added, "Let no preacher, therefore, suffer his right to conduct every part of the worship of Almighty God to be infringed on, either by singers or others; but let him sacredly preserve and calmly maintain his authority, as he who sacrifices this sacrifices not only Methodism, but the spirit and design of Christianity." *

Additional directions were given respecting the business of the Book Room. The circumstances of the preachers who had families, and were stationed in the poorer Circuits, and who had, under the existing usages, suffered much inconvenience, and even privation, were taken into consideration. In the beginning of Methodism, the Circuits were so large, and the preachers so few, that they were but seldom at home, and their board was necessarily provided by the different Societies to which they ministered. Even at this time a great change had taken place: the Circuits were much smaller; and the preachers, although much from home, were with their families more frequently and

* Minutes, vol. ii., p. 291.

for longer periods than formerly; but still no adequate provision was made for their support during that period. This defect in the system now attracted attention, and the following minute was accordingly adopted in respect of preachers so situated: "As we believe, a regular weekly allowance for board, more or less, as may be judged requisite, all circumstances considered, would most effectually relieve them; we recommend it to the Quarterly Meetings of those Circuits in which this is not already done, to take into their serious consideration the propriety and necessity of doing it."

Financial difficulties, and their cause.

The connexional funds had by this time again got into arrears, through the rapid multiplication of preachers and of chapels, insomuch that it was found necessary at this Conference to discuss the following question: "What can be done to extricate the Connexion from its present pecuniary embarrassments?" To this the following directions were given as an answer: "1. Let the rule which requires that every Circuit shall provide at least for one family, be carefully observed. 2. Let the following rule, made at Leeds in 1801, be strictly enforced; viz., 'If any Circuit petition the Conference for a preacher, and the petition be granted, every extraordinary expense incurred by the removal of such preacher to the new Circuit shall be borne by that Circuit.' 3. Let no more preachers be called out into the work than the Connexion can support. 4. Let greater caution be used as to multiplying chapels, which not only load the Societies with heavy debts, greater than they can bear, but require an increase of preachers to supply them, particularly on the Lord's days. 5. In stationing the preachers, let particular care be taken that the removals be as short as possible, much money having, we fear, been sometimes needlessly expended in removing

families to a greater distance than was either necessary or expedient, from the place of their last appointment." *

These were just such measures as the circumstances of the case required, and as would be necessary to be carefully and steadily enforced on a Connexion so steadily and rapidly increasing. It could scarcely be hoped that the financial provision would rise as rapidly as the demand for preachers and chapels. If a Society could obtain but half the amount necessary to raise a chapel, they would build one; and if they could raise but half of what was sufficient to maintain a preacher, they would apply for one; and, in most cases, both the man and the house were urgently needed, and generally great exertions were made by a poor people to meet the expenses incurred; but yet the aggregate of all the deficiencies made a large sum, and one which the resources of the Conference were insufficient to meet. Hence the necessity and importance of the above arrangements.

The growing wants of the Missions, also, came under consideration. In respect of these, it was decided that the superintendents should be charged with the duty of collecting those annual subscriptions for this object which Dr. Coke, as the general superintendent, could not get in; and it was ordered that such sums should be transmitted to the Book Room as early as possible. It was further enacted that the general collection, which had hitherto been only occasionally made in all the chapels in the Connexion for the Missions, should henceforth be made annually in every chapel. The Committee of Privileges was also enlarged and re-appointed.

Conference towns.

This was the first time the Conference had been held in Sheffield, and the first time also that the plan of rotation in use during the last few years of Wesley's life had been

* Minutes, vol. ii., p. 292.

departed from, or enlarged. The last four Conferences at which he presided were held in Manchester, London, Leeds, and Bristol; and this order was continued until the rotation had been gone over three times, making twelve years, from 1791 to 1803. This annual assembly was then held in Manchester in regular succession; and that for 1804 in London. The next in due course would have been at Leeds; but now Sheffield was added to the Conference towns; and in 1807 Liverpool was raised to the same honour, and the Conferences for many years afterward went in regular rotation through these six towns.

Literary persecution of Methodism. "Annual Review."

Methodism was about this time subject to a rather severe literary persecution. The first in the order of attack was an article in the "Annual Review," inserted as a critique on Myles's "Chronological History of Methodism." The reckless assertion, scurrilous language, and multiplied inconsistencies and contradictions, which abound in this article, place it beyond the pale of religious polemics. It might at that time be prudent to have noticed such virulence in the pages of the Methodist Magazine, for the sake of informing the Methodist people of the spirit and temper of their opponents; for, considering who and what the conductors of this periodical were, no surprise can be felt at any amount of ill-feeling which they might entertain towards the Methodists. Jacobins in politics, and Socinians in religious belief, they must have found the increasing influence of Methodism, in diffusing a high tone of loyal consistency, and promoting the spread of evangelical religion, produce a withering effect on their plans, purposes, and hopes. So that, however Methodist preachers might have felt annoyed at being denounced as "pestilent insects," preaching "sermons seasoned with brimstone, and glowing with hell-fire," and the like

language, no higher testimony could be given to their honourable character as citizens, and to their usefulness as ministers of religion, than the violent animosity of Mr. Arthur Aikin and his associates.

Le Mesurier's visitation sermon.

But violent opposition was not confined to such quarters. There was at this period of our history scarcely a channel through which misrepresentation and censure were more frequently poured on Methodism and Methodists, than in the visitation charges of the established clergy. One of these, which attracted some attention at the time, was preached by the Rev. T. Le Mesurier, at the visitation of the archdeacon of Bucks, at Stony Stratford, on May 2nd, 1806. This writer gravely informs those who heard or read his sermon, that the Methodist preachers of his day had "no kind of learning;" yet he himself writes in a manner which proves him to have been ignorant of the first principles of grammar and composition. But it will be sufficient to quote one single sentence from this sermon, to show the amount of the preacher's acquaintance with Methodism, and the relevancy of his attacks on its theology. He says, they "deny to man any liberty of action whatever;" and then proceeds to represent them as teaching, "that before the foundation of the world the Almighty did so irreversibly and absolutely decree who they should be that should be saved, or that should be damned, and did so likewise predestinate every man's actions, and the thoughts of his heart, that all that we can do can in no way place us nearer to Him, or farther from Him."

It appears marvellous, that a minister should feel so much concern about Methodism as to make its refutation the *staple* of a visitation sermon, and yet allow

himself to remain so ignorant of its principles as to charge the body which has revived and maintained, with unexampled consistency, the doctrines of general redemption, and other tenets of Arminianism, with holding and teaching the dogmas of absolute and unmitigated fatalism. Mr. Le Mesurier is no less happy, when he comments on doctrines which the Methodists do hold; but it is not necessary to go into detail.

Nott's Bampton Lecture.

Nor was this all. The Rev. G. F. Nott, when appointed to preach the Bampton Lecture, thought he could best carry out the intentions of its founder to "confirm and establish the Christian faith, and to confute all heretics and schismatics," by taking for his subject "Religious Enthusiasm," and making his sermon an attack on the Methodists. In this discourse it is difficult to say which excite the greater surprise,—the author's misrepresentations of the meaning of Scripture, or his misrepresentations of Methodism. Both greatly abound, but are exceeded by the false and distorted manner in which the personal characters of Wesley and Whitefield are exhibited, and which proves the author to have had as little respect for charity as for truth. We do not wish to dwell on these matters, or to refer to other clerical aggressors on Methodism; but the inquiry instinctively arises in the mind, Was Methodism the one great sin of the country? By its instrumentality, its enemies themselves being judges, multitudes of the ignorant and wicked had in every part of the country been reformed, and had given full scriptural proof of their conversion to God. Yet, while sin in various forms abounded in the land, and profaneness and vice were awfully prevalent,—while even many of the clergy were notoriously irreligious and immoral, —it was thought suitable and proper to turn away from all these, to pour out vials of clerical wrath on the Methodists,

until, as it was said at the time, it became almost a test of orthodoxy to abuse the followers of Wesley. To us there seems something exceedingly mistaken and unwise in all this. Even admitting the errors of the Methodists to be as great as they were represented to be, both in the church and the world other and louder calls for the exercise of Christian zeal might have been heard by the clergy of that day. Erring piety should have been considered as, at least, more tolerable than flagrant sin. Dr. Coke, moved by the unmeasured rancour of Mr. Nott, prepared an elaborate reply to his sermon; but, after mature reflection, it was considered that "the strictures were too severe to make converts, and too monstrous to gain credit with thinking people;" so they were left to be their own antidote, and the reply was never published.

Revival of religion in Bradford.

Favoured as the Methodist Societies have frequently been with special visitations of the Holy Spirit, that with which the Bradford Circuit was visited towards the close of 1805, must be considered one of the most remarkable; when the ministrations of Messrs. Suter and Wilson were attended with a very abundant unction from on high. For some considerable time previously the work of God had been in a prosperous state. The word preached was attended with power, several were awakened, some converted, believers were edified, and the whole Society seemed united in heart and in determination to grow in grace; when at the September quarterly watchnight, after several had engaged in exhortation and prayer, pleasing indications were given that the great Head of the Church was about to pour his Holy Spirit more abundantly upon the people. Several persons were in distress for their sins; and, while a member of Society was pleading the efficacy of the great atonement on behalf of one of

the number, he was enabled to trust in Christ, and became the witness of His power to save. "So extensively, from that hour, was the power of this heavenly influence diffused, that for several months there was scarcely a sermon preached, or any religious service held, under which some were not convinced of sin, or enabled to rejoice in God. The doors of the octagon chapel for ten or twelve weeks were scarcely ever closed, either by day or night; one party of worshippers frequently waiting without, till those within had fulfilled the appointed hour of service. The regular preaching, during that period, was of necessity almost laid aside; no sooner in many instances was the text announced, than the cries of persons in distress so interrupted the preacher, that the service of the word was at once exchanged for one of general and earnest intercession. Two zealous men, of established piety, were for some time supported by the Society, in order that they might be constantly employed in exhorting, or praying with those who were in distress, or in holding meetings for prayer in the immediate neighbourhood. In several instances, lovefeasts were held in the open air, no chapel being sufficiently large to accommodate the crowds who attended from the adjoining Circuits.

"Numbers of young persons were at this period brought under a concern for their salvation; more than three hundred of whom were met in Class by Messrs. Blackburn and Whitaker, who in this important duty were usefully employed every evening of the week. This gracious work was not, however, limited to the young, but embraced persons of well-nigh every age and station in life. Upwards of nine hundred individuals received during the year notes of admission, on trial, into the Society; and at the Conference of 1806 a net increase of five hundred and twenty

members was reported," * after all the loss, by deaths, removals, and other causes, had been made up.

Progress of the Irish Mission.

The Irish Mission still went on prosperously, and was favoured by several pious clergymen. The Rev. Thomas Kelly greatly aided Mr. Ouseley by making a present of several hundred copies of a tract, containing extracts from the Life and Epistles of Peter, with others of a similar character, to the number of about a thousand altogether. These he distributed to members of the congregations, after preaching; and they were rendered very useful, being read by the poor Papists with eagerness and delight.

In a part of Leinster to the south of Dublin, very gracious effects resulted from the labours of the missionaries. In one Circuit alone, more than one hundred members were added to the Society, as the fruit of their preaching. Many of these had been Romanists, but were not ashamed after their conversion to maintain their profession of godliness, although exposed to great contumely and persecution. Yet, although so favoured by the Divine blessing, the work was not carried on without much opposition, and the missionaries were frequently placed in great peril. This was the case with Mr. Ouseley in the autumn of 1805. He commenced preaching in the streets of Carlow, on the Lord's day, before the church congregation had reached the place in which he stood. The streets were filled with country labourers, who had, as is common in that part of Ireland, crowded into town to look for employment, with their reaping-hooks over their shoulders. Several rushed on Mr. Ouseley, determined, it would seem, to destroy him. A friendly man, a saddler, near whose house he stood, opened the lower half of his shop-door, and

* STAMP'S "Methodism in Bradford," p. 86.

dragged him in from the mob. In a short time the military marched from church, when Mr. Ouseley re-commenced, and preached his sermon to an attentive congregation.

In the county of Cavan, Mr. Ouseley had much encouragement: crowds attended the preaching in markets, fairs, and other places: while the rain, and sometimes the snow, descended upon them, hundreds would stand patiently listening to the word of life. But the thirst for hearing, and respect for the preacher, produced results which the missionary thought much more remarkable than their persisting to brave the inclemency of the weather. "It is now come to this," writes Mr. Ouseley, "that they can calmly, and without the least symptom of displeasure, hear the most profound mysteries and peculiarities of their religion opened up and exposed, supposing it to be done in love and tenderness." If it were not so serious a matter, it would be amusing to think of the mysteries which he would thus open up with tenderness and love. "He would reason with them, and they would bear it, that no frail sinner or mortal man could create Christ of a bit of bread; that it is all invention and finesse to obtain power, honour, and profit; and that no informed priest believed a single tittle of what he himself taught. Such were the powerful arguments used by him on some occasions, and delivered in such a torrent of reasoning, with tears streaming down his cheeks, that it was absolutely irresistible."

It is scarcely possible to detail Mr. Ouseley's incessant labour in any language but his own. "In the town of Belturbet," he says, "a few days ago, we held six different meetings, which engaged us from morning till eleven o'clock at night. At three of these we preached to vast congregations in the market-house; two were Class-meetings, and one a

meeting for renewing our covenant with God; when the preaching-house was so full, that we could hardly get through the people to the pulpit. The Lord was very present with us. After the Covenant service thirty joined the Society." *

Undue importance should not be attached to those special manifestations of grace usually called "revivals,"—in which great numbers of persons are awakened and brought to God in a comparatively short space of time,—as a means of Methodist progress and increase. As we have before observed, the ordinary operation of the Spirit, blessing the word preached to the hearers, and leading them to turn from their sins to the Lord, has ever been the grand means of rearing up and maintaining the Methodist Societies, though affording but few incidents for record. The pious labours of a godly minister, whose word descends as the dew of heaven, and, under the fructifying influence of the Holy Ghost, produces the fruits of good living to the praise and glory of God, has been the normal state of Methodism in all places and stages of its progress; and the continued existence of this gracious power must be always the staple means of the prosperity of the Connexion.

Religious prosperity in the Keighley Circuit.

While, however, this presents few materials for historical record, those showers of blessing with which most parts of this Zion have been at one time or another visited, present us with such blessed and startling results as to demand attention. In the early part of 1806, Keighley was thus visited. Every time the preachers went to Yeadon, they found the congregation increased, and other appearances justified the hope of coming prosperity. About the end of January that hope was realized. Small companies began to meet together for prayer, and several were brought

* Ouseley's Life, p. 152.

into the liberty of the children of God. But the private houses soon became too small to contain the numbers which thus came together: recourse was then had to the vestry; but that also soon became insufficient: the chapel was then occupied; three or four hundred would attend the prayer-meeting, and about forty persons found peace with God during the first week. One remarkable feature in these gracious visitations, and which was particularly observable here, is the fact, that the effectual operation of the Spirit was not confined to opportunities for public worship. Numbers were struck with deep convictions in their own houses; their anxiety leading them to send for persons to come and pray with them. The neighbours, hearing the well-known sound, flocked in, and not unfrequently continued in prayer or praise till the evening, the mid-day meal frequently forgotten, or laid aside untouched. Three, five, or seven persons frequently obtained a sense of pardoning mercy in these little meetings. Thus the work continued to spread, until most of the houses in the place were visited with salvation.

It is not to be expected that such a work should be carried on without producing some irregularity, and even disorder. There was, however, with one grave exception, not much of this to be complained of at Yeadon. The exception referred to was certainly reprehensible; it consisted in keeping a mill idle the whole of one afternoon. A number of men being employed at this place, they agreed to have a prayer-meeting during the greater part of the hour appropriated for dinner. But at this time it was easier to arrange for the beginning of a prayer-meeting, than to fix the time of its being closed. They began to pray; and under a mighty influence of the Spirit they continued thus engaged until night. Yet this neglect of

their duty to their employer did not give so much offence as might have been expected. He came, looked in, saw how they were engaged, and quietly retired, saying, "I dare not disturb them; for God is among them." Five hundred and seven notes of admission were given to the Yeadon Society alone, and six hundred and fifty-six throughout the Circuit, during the quarter.*

Dr. Coke projects a plan for Home Missions in England.

The marriage of Dr. Coke did not interfere with his devoted efforts to extend the kingdom of the Redeemer, but rather, by placing another fortune in his hands, enabled him to expand his views and plans further than had been yet attempted. The Missions in the West Indies, and the Societies in British America, were prospering. Success had abundantly crowned the efforts made to spread a knowledge of Christ among the hitherto neglected native Irish and Welsh; and these triumphs kindled in the pious doctor earnest desire for further conquests. Looking around for a field for fresh exertions, he saw many parts of England where great religious destitution prevailed,—places which, from their geographical position, were not likely to be reached by the existing ordinary Circuit action; nor, indeed, by any evangelical agency, except through some means analogous to missionary operation. To these districts Dr. Coke, therefore, bent his earnest attention, with a view to some adequate provision. He found great numbers of people living beyond the reach of any place of worship, and in consequence lamentably ignorant of the truths and duties of Christianity. Yet the financial difficulties which the Connexion already felt, and the magnitude of the measures which would be necessary to provide for the pressing want which Dr. Coke had exhibited, induced many among his brethren to doubt the

* "Methodist Magazine," 1819, p. 9.

expediency of the attempt. The mind of Dr. Coke, however, knew not how to quail before difficulty or opposition; but rose in godly energy to grapple with every obstacle. He prepared himself to make a full disclosure of the existing want, with a matured plan for its immediate relief.

The Conference of 1806.

The Conference of 1806 met at Leeds, July 28th, and appointed Adam Clarke president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The number of Circuits had now increased to 203. Kettering, Wisbeach, Welchpool, Peel, and Wolsingham had ceased to be Circuits; and Daventry, Stamford, Spalding, Newtown, Llangollen, Pwllheli, Dolgelly, Machynlleth, Leigh, Chesterfield, Penrith, Ramsey, Skibbereen, and Miltown became Circuits. The number of members in the Societies of Great Britain and Ireland was 133,572, being an increase of 8,336; and those in the West India Islands and British America were 14,840, a decrease of 468. The rapid and continual progress of the work made a large demand for an increasing number of labourers. To such an extent was this the case at this Conference, that the extraordinary course was adopted, after admitting twenty-four young men in the usual way, of naming fourteen others to be also admitted, "provided they meet with the approbation of the next Quarterly Meetings of their respective Circuits; and that they be severally examined according to rule, and approved by three of the neighbouring superintendents." Among the names of the young men received this year, we find that of Edmund Grindrod. The obituary of preachers removed by death during the preceding year, contains some names which will always be invested with special interest in the annals of Methodism. Among these we reckon John Crook, frequently spoken of as the apostle of the Isle of Man,

Obituary of preachers: John Crook.

having been the instrument of introducing Methodism and fostering its progress in that islet, until it was permanently established. In the north of Ireland, he was also the means of "turning many from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." He laboured in the itinerancy more than thirty years, and died at the age of 63, whilst engaged on the Scarborough Circuit. Although much afflicted during the last years of his life, he persevered in his course of ministerial duty, and, when unable to stand, preached on his knees. During the last few months of his life, his labours were attended by a special blessing, and rendered very successful.

John Pawson.

John Pawson is another name found in this list. He was converted to God in 1760, and called to the work of the ministry in 1762. He was truly one of the fathers of the Connexion. For a considerable period before the death of Wesley, he was his faithful and trustworthy assistant; and from thenceforth, in every time of danger or difficulty, he bore his full share of connexional labour and responsibility. To the doctrine and discipline of Methodism he was conscientiously attached, and was uniformly zealous in maintaining them. He pursued an active course of ministerial labour forty-three years. Although painfully afflicted in the latter years of his life, he persevered with his work, and finished his course with a peaceful and triumphant death, in the sixty-ninth year of his age.

Thomas Rutherford.

Another of the preachers, removed by death during this year, of more than ordinary eminence, was Thomas Rutherford. He laboured with great acceptance and success thirty-four years. His preaching was peculiarly energetic and affecting. He bore testimony with his dying breath to the truth and power of those doctrines which he had so long preached, declaring that they were then his support and comfort.

Expulsion of Joseph Cooke.

Another and different statement requires, at least, a passing notice. We are informed by the Minutes, that at this time "Joseph Cooke desisted from travelling." He had been accused at the preceding Conference of holding and teaching erroneous doctrines, particularly respecting the nature of faith, and the witness of the Spirit. A year was allowed him for careful consideration, that he might then state his mature and deliberate judgment on the points at issue, he being required, in the meantime, to keep whatever peculiar notions he held strictly to himself. This he promised to do, and sent the president of the Conference a declaration, in which he says, "I most heartily and unequivocally declare to you, that I believe it is the privilege of every Christian believer to enjoy the witness of the Spirit, as taught by Messrs. Wesley and Fletcher;" and further, "I think it impossible to believe the doctrine more cordially than I do. I trust that this business will teach me to be very cautious in my expressions upon this and all other subjects in future." Yet, strange to say, after a few months, Mr. Cooke gave his views at large to the world on those subjects, in two sermons on "Justification by Faith," and "the Witness of the Spirit," which he published in a cheap pamphlet. It should be observed here, that Mr. Cooke was residing in Rochdale when the complaint was made respecting the soundness of his doctrine, where these sermons had been preached in the ordinary course of his duty. But when the sermons were published, Mr. Cooke was on the Sunderland Circuit. Yet the sermons were printed at Rochdale, and published there, and addressed to "the Members of the Methodist Society" in that town. In consequence of this publication, the sermons were carefully considered at the Leeds Conference, and were found to contain doctrines totally at

variance with Methodism,—teaching, indeed, that justifying faith precedes repentance, and that every penitent is justified as a penitent; and denying altogether the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, as taught by Wesley, and held by the Methodists. The Conference, having given him time for consideration, and finding that he had employed it, in violation of his promise, in making public sentiments directly at variance with those which, as a Methodist preacher, he was bound to teach, had no alternative but to expel him from the body; which was done unanimously.

The controversy to which it led.

No sooner, however, had this expulsion taken place, than the reason became apparent why Mr. Cooke, while living in Sunderland, had printed and published his sermons at Rochdale, and addressed them to the members of that Society. Mr. Cooke had, before leaving that town, made a party, which advised with him how to act in respect of the Conference, and pledged itself "to stand by him."* This promise they redeemed; for, on Mr. Cooke's expulsion, they provided him a chapel, and rallied round him.

Mr. Edward Hare, who followed Mr. Cooke as a preacher in the Rochdale Circuit, finding the views put forth in Mr. Cooke's two published sermons operating injuriously on the Society, published a refutation of their doctrines, in five letters addressed to the author. Mr. Cooke, in reply, sent forth a pamphlet, entitled, "Methodism condemned by Methodist Preachers," in which he endeavoured to vindicate the tenets of his sermons, maintaining that they exhibited the true Methodist doctrines, and that the Conference, in condemning these, had therefore condemned Methodism itself. To this piece Mr. Hare furnished a triumphant reply, called, "Genuine Methodism acquitted, and spurious Methodism condemned," in which the argu-

Great ability displayed by Mr. Hare.

* "Genuine Methodism acquitted," &c., p. 88.

ments of Mr. Cooke are completely demolished, so that when he printed a letter, as a rejoinder, he scarcely dared to maintain the position he had originally assumed, but rather attempted to cast ridicule on the exhibition of the Methodist doctrine, as propounded by Mr. Hare. This gentleman closed the controversy by a tract, entitled, "The Sentence confirmed," in which he fully established what he had previously advanced, and fairly drove Mr. Cooke from the field. Painful and injurious as this affair was to the Methodist preachers, and to the people of Rochdale, it resulted in an important vindication of a most essential branch of sound Methodist theology. If the writings of Wesley and Fletcher had left any want to be supplied, for detecting and separating the illusive dogmas of Pharisaism from the genuine doctrines of the Gospel, it is abundantly provided in these masterly, but unpretending, tracts of Mr. Hare. Mr. Cooke died in 1811, and the chapel provided for him was afterward attached to the Methodist Connexion. The important polemical tracts of Mr. Hare are not the only beneficial results of this controversy. The publications of Mr. Cooke had been distributed so extensively, and contained so much that was specious and adapted to mislead ordinary readers, that the Conference desired some clear and forcible enunciation of Gospel truth on justification by faith, the grand subject at issue. Mr. Jabez Bunting was accordingly requested to preach a sermon on this subject. He complied with this request, and delivered the discourse at Albion Street chapel, Leeds, before the Conference of 1812, then assembled in that town. It contained a lucid and scriptural view of justifying faith, and will ever be considered a standard work on this most important doctrine.

The plan projected by Dr. Coke for the establishment

of Home Missions in the most destitute parts of England, was fully considered by the Conference preceding, and eight missionary districts marked out, to each of which a preacher was appointed, to act under the direction of the neighbouring superintendents. The following were the first appointments:—

Dr. Coke's home missionary plan brought into operation.

William Tranter, for Rutlandshire; Richard Smeatham, for the country in the vicinity of Thetford; John Martin, for the country in the vicinity of Devizes; Charles Haime, for the country in the vicinity of Collumpton; John Wright, for the country about the Peak of Derbyshire; Edward Wilson, for Ulverstone and its vicinity; John Palmer, for the country in the vicinity of Taunton; William Brown, for the Meol's country in Lancashire.

This was a most important measure. It carried the plain truths of the Gospel to great numbers who before had scarcely any means of becoming acquainted with them, and sought out many who, although some of them might possibly have churches within their reach, having been brought up in ignorance and sin, utterly neglected public worship. The time when this movement was made is as important as its character. Much has since been done, both by the National Church and by other churches, for diffusing religious knowledge and influence throughout destitute parts of the country; but no measure of the kind was at this time contemplated. It was left for Methodism to take the initiative; and, having roused the churches to action in the most populous parts of the country, it, by this measure, turned their attention to the want of some adequate provision for the more destitute portions of the country.

Leave was given at this Conference for the erection of thirty-eight new chapels; and for making collections

within certain prescribed limits for forty-four needy chapels.

Decision of the Conference to adopt legal measures for the recovery of Brighouse chapel.

A resolution was adopted at this Conference, directing "the Committee of Privileges in London to commence a suit at law" for the recovery of the chapel at Brighouse, in the Halifax Circuit. The case of this house was peculiar, and its alienation from its original design exceedingly flagrant. Soon after the expulsion of Mr. Kilham, a majority of the trustees adopted his views, four adhering to the Conference, and five joining Mr. Kilham. This bare majority, in defiance of the express terms of their trust, and of the well-known intentions of those who contributed towards the erection of the building, expelled the Methodist preachers, and handed it over to those of the New Connexion.

In this emergency John Sharp, a noble-minded individual, opened his house, had it licensed for preaching, and in a most honourable and praiseworthy manner endeavoured to promote an amicable and equitable adjustment of the dispute; but the conduct of the seceders was so clearly opposed to the plainest rules of justice, that a local preacher named John Garside declared, "If we cannot support our new religion without robbing John Sharp, I will have nothing farther to do with it;" and he accordingly left them. We give the following particulars from the pen of a gentleman on the spot, fully conversant with the whole subject:—

"Several attempts were made to regain the chapel, or to adjust the matter in an amicable manner. It is useless to recite the various scenes of an unpleasant nature which occurred; but, to show that the old body were disposed for peace, I may remark that in 1804 John Sharp chose three disinterested individuals to wait upon all the trustees;

(the Kilhamite trustees were then five in number, and the others four;) these three men made to those five trustees the following reasonable proposals, viz.:—To value the trust estate as it then stood, and divide it into nine shares, (exclusive of the moneys the Kilhamites had laid out in the seats, clock, burying ground, &c.,) reckoning five shares for them, and four for us. It was then proposed that we should cast lots which party should have the chapel. In case the lot should fall to us, we further offered to indemnify or pay them for all the extra expense they had been at in pewing the chapel, &c., upon a fair valuation, besides paying them the amount of their five shares. However, this, like all former proposals, was treated with contempt.

"Now, what was more reasonable than the foregoing proposals? Had the new party subscribed large sums to the chapel, they even then would have had a plea for their arbitrary conduct. But in looking at their subscriptions, those five men subscribed only £19. 19*s.*, while the others subscribed £41. 15*s.*; and yet the chapel must be perverted to other purposes than those for which it was originally intended, and for which every fraction of the money subscribed had been given. And after the spread of the opinions then prevalent, there was a majority of the subscribers against the chapel being prostituted to any other purpose than that for which it was originally intended." *

We have given the above quotation, not because it expresses our opinion; for we think too much by far, in every way, was conceded in it by those who represented the equitable holders of the property: but we reprint this passage for the purpose of showing the sacrifices which the Methodists of that day were disposed to make, rather than

* WALKER'S "Methodism in Halifax," p. 233.

resort to legal proceedings for the recovery of their just rights.

The long delay but ultimate success of the suit.

At length, however, after the decision of Conference above given, a bill was filed in the High Court of Chancery in the name of John Sharp; which, after the delays then especially prevailing in that Court, issued in the following decree:—"That, as what was now called in the pleadings, for the sake of distinction, the Old Conference, was the only Conference which existed at the time of the execution of the Trust Deed, and for many years afterward, it must be determined to be that Conference only which was referred to in the Deed. And as the trustees had not reserved, by any clause in the Deed, power of making new regulations by any decision of a majority of themselves, they must be compelled to execute the trust according to the laws and regulations of that Conference for the use of which they held the trust estate, and admit those preachers only who were sent by the Old Conference." By this important decision, the Methodist preaching was brought back from the house of John Sharp to the chapel, and the cause began again to prosper, "though great evil was consequent upon the proceedings of the now exasperated party."

Several important regulations were made at this time with respect to the management of the Foreign Missions, the principal of which was their division into Districts, after the manner of the Home work; and the appointment of chairmen and District Meetings, charged with the duty of keeping books for all their accounts, and minutes of all their business, and of furnishing ample reports of these, and of the state and requirements of the work of God in their several Districts, to the general superintendent and Committee at home.

Methodist co-operation in the formation and progress of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The British and Foreign Bible Society was instituted in 1804: Mr. Christopher Sundius, a zealous Methodist, was one of the members of its first Committee; and Mr. Joseph Butterworth, afterward M.P. for Dover, a very early member. Indeed, from the beginning, the Methodists took a deep interest in the prosperity of this excellent institution. Adam Clarke, the president of the Conference, was also elected on the Committee, and rendered essential service by the application of his oriental learning to the benevolent projects of the Society. He corresponded with its president, Lord Teignmouth, on the subject of printing the Bible in the Arabic language; and also himself constructed a scale of types, executed with singular beauty, for the printing of a Tartar New Testament. A new fount was cast agreeably to his model. In these and other ways did Mr. Clarke render such essential service to the Society, that the Committee, in the most handsome manner, sent him a gratuity of fifty pounds, as some compensation for the time and labour expended by him in their service. This sum he, in an equally honourable and generous manner, immediately returned, requesting that it might be devoted to the direct objects of the Society,—the circulation of the Scriptures. In recording this circumstance in a special minute, the Committee observes, "Gratuitous exertions in the cause of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and refusals to accept pecuniary returns, have abounded greatly in every period of its history; Mr. Adam Clarke is, however, not to be classed with ordinary contributors." In the early part of 1807, this eminent Methodist minister received the degree of Master of Arts from King's College, Aberdeen.

Dr. Coke was engaged this year, beyond the demands made on his time by the superintendence of the Missions,

Dr. Coke's Commentary completed and published.

in completing his Commentary on the Holy Scriptures. The last sheet of this important work was prepared for the printer, June 7th, 1807. After it was finished, in order to review the passing events which at that time convulsed Europe, and astonished the whole civilized world, he wrote an Appendix to it, which was also printed separately under the title of "Recent Occurrences of Europe." This piece was followed by an index, which completed the voluminous undertaking.

The provision made for the preachers still miserably deficient in some Circuits.

Although, in the fourteen years which had elapsed since the death of Wesley, Methodism had been greatly extended, the number of Circuits and of preachers was nearly doubled, and there had been in the principal Societies a corresponding progress made in the provision for their ministers; in the poorer Circuits this was still lamentably deficient. We have a ray of light cast on this subject in the case of Mr. Joseph Entwisle, while labouring this year in Rochester. Although invited to large and important Circuits, he, to avoid a long removal, and to obtain some temporary retirement, complied with the wishes of the friends in this city, and went to their Circuit. His colleague was Mr. Thomas Stanley, then unmarried. The Circuit arrangement for the preachers was, that Mr. Stanley was to lodge in the house of his superintendent, and go round, according to an arranged plan, to the friends' houses, to take his meals, there being no other provision made for his board. Nor was the case of Mr. Entwisle himself much better. The Circuit being too poor to provide the customary allowance for him, his wife, and servant, it had to come from the Contingent Fund, and therefore could not be received until the ensuing Conference. Such were the inconveniences with which Methodist preachers still had to struggle, in order to carry on the great work

to which they were called. And this they did with energy and success. On entering upon the Circuit, Mr. Entwisle found the sphere of labour very contracted, there being but four Societies in the whole,—Rochester, Brompton, Gillingham, and Sheerness; and these were small, the total number of persons not exceeding three hundred and seventy-five. But the labours of the preachers were crowned with success: they extended their exertions, introduced preaching into new places, and, instead of confining themselves to the former limits, they sought out places and people hitherto unvisited with a Gospel ministry. "Never," says Mr. Entwisle, "did I see so much fruit of my labours as here, in the time." The following extract from his journal shows the manner in which this success was won:—"My colleague, Mr. Stanley, is a healthy man, and has his heart in the work, so that I have good help; indeed, without this the work could not be done. Having no horse, we have much walking in lonesome roads, narrow lanes, wet fields, and, in one instance, through an extensive park in the night. As yet, we have no lodgings in our new places. One of them is five miles, another six, and another eight miles distant: from these places we return to supper. However, we have souls for our hire; and many poor people come two, three, and even four or five miles beyond where we preach, thirsting for the words of eternal life. In those places, and others in this country, the people never before heard a Methodist preacher. The whole country seems ready to receive us; and I doubt not but we could introduce preaching into every village, had we an opportunity of going. But this we cannot do, unless we had another preacher." *

Success of the ministry at Rochester.

* "Memoir of Joseph Entwisle," p. 221.

In this manner the Gospel of Christ was carried by the Methodist preachers to the most remote parts of the country. Impelled by an earnest desire to save souls, they truly *laboured* for this object, and the great Head of the church attended their word with His blessing.

Wickedness of Nightingale's "Portraiture of Methodism."

Yet these devoted men were persecuted, subjected to all the force of ridicule, and held up to public scorn. At the end of this Methodistic year, "A Portraiture of Methodism" was published. It was no mere tract, but an octavo of nearly five hundred pages, professedly written in a series of letters to a lady. In this work, all that the labour, ingenuity, wit, and energy of the author could accomplish to make Wesley appear ridiculous and puerile, and to hold up Methodism to contempt, was done. A more pernicious parody on spiritual religion, a more flagrant and unjust caricature of serious things, was scarcely ever presented to the world. Yet this was embodied in a smooth and easy style, and seasoned with just enough of plausibility and humour to make it acceptable to the carnal and the vain. There can be little doubt that it did to some extent injure Methodism in particular, and the progress of spiritual religion generally; and raise the laugh, and point the sneer, at the experience of vital godliness. Yet, with the whole case before us, every other feeling is lost in sorrow and pity for the wretched author of such impiety. The reader will remember the conversion of a Deist, narrated on a preceding page.* Strange to say, this "Portraiture" came from his pen. After being connected with Methodism for some time, he left the Society, and lived awhile, in a manner which did not redound to his honour, in Macclesfield. He then became a Unitarian minister, and was so engaged when he wrote this book.

* See p. 283.

Repentance and death of its author.

He died at Peckham, in the autumn of 1823; but before he passed away, he wrote a letter to the editor of the Methodist Magazine, in which he says, "About twenty years have elapsed since I resigned my ticket as a member of the Methodist Society into your hands. O, what a twenty years have they been! I would give twenty worlds, did I possess them, to have them recalled! Twenty years! Good God! what a length of time! and that, too, a great part of it, spent in the public defence of doctrines, which, however plausible at first sight, I find now, when death stares me immediately in the face, shrink from my grasp, and refuse me one gleam of consolation against the terrors of a broken law, and the horrors of a guilty conscience!" Mr. Nightingale then says, that if others can obtain "a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sin," and other Gospel blessings, without a cordial reception "of the doctrines of the Trinity, the atonement, and other cognate doctrines, they may do so;" but, he adds, "I am compelled, as far as I feel my own soul concerned, with all the seriousness and earnestness of a dying man, to attest, that *I have made the experiment, and it has failed.* Hence, I have been driven once more to seek refuge in the blood of atonement.—I have once more found peace and joy in believing, and die happy, under a sense of the Divine pardon, obtained for me by the blood and righteousness of my dear Redeemer and Lord Jesus, the Friend of sinners." This important letter closes with his "solemn protest against the light spirit in which the 'Portraiture of Methodism' was written. I am truly sorry for having published that foolish book; and for the grief it has given many of the dear children of God; and for the vile and wicked use which on many occasions has been

made of the publication." * This letter of Mr. Nightingale supplies the best possible antidote to the evil tendency of his work.

The Christian Advocate's attack on Methodism

Methodism, however, was not only opposed by persons situated as Mr. Nightingale was, when he wrote his "Portraiture." Many of the clergy still continued to deprecate the spread of Methodism, and to exert themselves to check its progress. The Christian Advocate at Cambridge felt himself called on to do something in this way. He raised his warning voice, and published "An Address to the Methodists," in which he displayed nothing so prominently as his ignorance of the doctrines and practices of which he complained. He, indeed, sadly lamented the prevalence of lay-preaching, of men relying on their being called of God to preach,—as though he himself had not made such a profession at his ordination,—and appealed to the Methodists thus, "Let me then exhort all pious Christians not to violate the unity of Christ's body. Will you tear asunder the joints of Him, one of whose bones was forbidden to be broken, because some of us bow when we hear His name? For so trivial a cause will you destroy the harmony of this world, and thin the ranks of heaven?"

His serious error.

The grand error of the Christian Advocate, in common with all the writers of his class, was this:—He saw large congregations of pious and devoted Christians, and accused Methodism, and especially the Methodist preachers, of rending these away from the National Church, which is described as the body of Christ. But so far from this being the case, when Methodism found these persons, they were neither members of the church nor of Christ, in any scriptural sense, but in the "gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1823, p. 751.

iniquity." The piety, sobriety, and morals of these persons, which raised the desires of this class of writers, were not schismatically torn from the Established Church, but a creation of the Holy Ghost through Methodist instrumentality.

The Conference of 1807.

The Conference of 1807 was held at Liverpool, it being the first meeting of the assembly in that town. John Barber was president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The number of Circuits was now 217,* being an increase of 14. The following were the changes made:—Spalding, Pwllheli, and Hexham ceased to be reckoned as Circuits; while Queen Street, (London,) Lewes and Brighton, Kettering, Wisbeach, Warminster, Pembroke, Llandilo, Aberystwith, Bromsgrove, Herefordshire, Mansfield, Reeth, Shields, and Alston became Circuits. The following Home Mission Stations were also inserted in the list, and numbered as Circuits:—Bideford Mission, South Devon Mission, and North Moels Mission. Besides these, the following stand in the list, but are not numbered as Circuits:—Ulverstone, William Stones, missionary; William Salt, missionary for Belper; A. E. Farrar, for Holderness; John Brown, jun., for Berwick. The number of members in Society, in the British and Irish Circuits, was 143,102, being an increase of 9,530. The number in the Societies of British America, the West Indies, and Gibraltar, was 14,577, being a decrease of 303. Leave was given for the erection of 80 new chapels, and for making collections in the chapels within certain prescribed limits for 53 needy chapel trusts. The Committee of Privileges was re-appointed.

Its transactions.

Further regulations were proposed and adopted with respect to the management of the Foreign Missions. They were in substance these:—No person was to be employed as

* The Minutes give 218; but Gibraltar, 177, is in that list, which is here omitted.

a missionary who was not deemed perfectly fit to be engaged in the work of a regular home Circuit. Young preachers on Mission Stations were in future to be subject to the same rules, in respect of marriage, as the preachers were at home. Public collections were required to be made in all the congregations, and to be transmitted to Mr. Lomas before Christmas. It was specially determined that none of the preachers employed in the West Indies should "be at liberty to marry any person who will not previously, in the legal method, emancipate all the slaves of which she may be possessed; and if any of our brethren there, already married, have, by such marriage, or in any other way, become proprietors of slaves, we require those brethren to take immediate and effectual steps for their emancipation." The secretary of the Missionary Committee in London was directed to send a copy of this last minute to every preacher in the West Indies, and to require a report next year of the manner in which it should have been obeyed.

Further regulations were also made respecting the admission of preachers into full Connexion; for expediting the business of the Conference; and for the prompt and punctual payment of the collections on behalf of the general funds. Camp-meetings were forbidden; and no person was in future to be allowed to hold office in the Societies who held opinions in opposition to the leading doctrines of the body. Forty-six preachers were at this time received on trial, among whom we find the name of John James, who afterward occupied an honourable position in the Connexion.

Obituary of preachers: John Cricket.

In the annual obituary of preachers, there are one or two names which deserve notice. The death of John Cricket took place during this year. He is said, in the official notice in the Minutes, to have been "a man of simple

manners, tried integrity, and unaffected piety;" and this testimony is undoubtedly just; but the first part of it certainly fails to convey any idea of the peculiar character of Mr. Cricket's simplicity of mind; nor, indeed, are we anxious to do this, or several anecdotes might be given which would raise astonishment, that a man, characterized by a simplicity so analogous to childishness, and an ignorance or disregard of many of the conventional usages of society, which made him appear so very eccentric, could have sustained the character of an able and useful minister. Yet this he did; for his talents, as a preacher, though not brilliant, were respectable; while the cast of mind to which reference has been made, rendered his ideas original, and made his observations peculiarly pertinent. The great secret of his power, however, was his deep piety. Its intensity seized, and sanctified to the Lord's service, a mind which nothing else would have brought into any tolerable subjection to a course of regular duty. He was a loyal subject, and a sound Methodist; one whom none of the malign influences of the period could pervert. He laboured as a preacher with acceptance and success, and died happy in God. A day or two before he died, when urged to have further medical aid, he replied, "It is of no use; I tell you I am going home; my work is done."

James Rogers.

James Rogers also died in this year. He has been repeatedly referred to in the preceding parts of this history. He was called to the work of the ministry at an early age, and bore the burden in the heat of the day. He possessed a strong and vigorous understanding, and exerted himself with considerable success to procure that knowledge which his high calling required. His sermons were consequently sound expositions of scriptural truth, zealously enforced, and rendered impressive and useful. He discharged the

full duties of the ministry through a period of thirty-two years, after which increasing infirmities compelled him to retire from its arduous labour, when he settled at Guisborough in Yorkshire, within a few miles of the place of his birth. His end was peaceful and happy.

Adam Clarke re-appointed to London at the special request of the Bible Society.

Mr. Adam Clarke had been, prior to this Conference, two years superintendent of the London Circuit, this period being at that time the full term that a preacher could remain consecutively in one Circuit. We find him, however, stationed there a third year; and to his appointment the following explanatory note is appended in the Minutes: "Brother Clarke is returned to London at the unanimous request of the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society; from whose respectful and polite request, transmitted to the Conference, we learn that Brother Clarke's assistance is indispensably necessary to the accomplishment of several plans which that most respectable Society has entered on, for furnishing various heathen and Mahommedan nations with the Holy Scriptures in their respective languages." The Conference not only thus promptly responded to the application of the Committee of the Bible Society, but, in order in the best way in their power to testify the lively interest which they felt in the success of that excellent institution, they ordered a collection to be made in behalf of its funds, in all the principal chapels throughout the Connexion, to be presented to the Committee through Mr. Clarke. This was done in due course, the proceeds amounting to £1,300. A case of this kind affords a reply to many of the allegations made by the clerical opponents of Methodism about this time, that the Methodist preachers had no kind of learning. But this was not the only testimony borne to the talents and scholarship of Adam

Clarke. On the 3rd of March, 1808, he was officially informed that King's College, Aberdeen, which had previously conferred on him the degree of M.A., had now unanimously voted to him "the highest designation in its gift,—that of LL.D." Nor was the Bible Society the only party which sought the aid of Dr. Adam Clarke's abilities and learning.

Dr. Clarke engaged by the government commissioners to continue the collection of state papers known as "Rymer's *Fœdera*."

The commissioners of the public records of the kingdom turned their attention to Dr. Clarke, as a suitable person for the important office of selecting and arranging those state papers which might serve to continue and complete the collection generally called "Rymer's *Fœdera*." This work had remained in abeyance for seven years, because the Commissioners knew no person to whom they could confide the undertaking. As this was a labour of great public interest and utility, it may be desirable to make its character and object intelligible to the reader.

Nature and object of this work.

The work above named was the production of Thomas Rymer, a learned antiquarian and critic, a native of Yorkshire, who died in 1713. He wrote some dramatical pieces, and others on history; but his principal literary effort was an arrangement of state papers containing treaties, conventions, letters, acts of state, public correspondence of the British monarchs, negotiations, summons to Parliament, patents for honours, inventions, &c. This compilation was very extensive. Fourteen volumes were published in Mr. Rymer's lifetime; the fifteenth and sixteenth were prepared for the press, and published after his death, by Mr. Sanderson, his assistant, by whom also was added a seventeenth volume, with an extensive apparatus of indexes, and afterwards three other volumes; making in the whole twenty volumes folio, principally in Latin. These records ranged from the reign of Henry I., A.D. 1131, to

the sixth year of Charles II., A.D. 1666. Mr. Rymer dedicated his work to Queen Anne.

What had been thus begun by private learning, labour, and enterprise, was thought worthy of being followed up at the public expense. As early as the beginning of 1800, a Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the state of the public records of the kingdom; and to report the same to the House, with such recommendations as they saw proper for the preservation, arrangement, and more convenient use of the same. This report was made in the following July, when an address founded thereon was presented to the king, setting forth that some of these records had been preserved with order and regularity, others were wholly unarranged, and exposed to injury and embezzlement, and were daily perishing with damp, and incurring continual risk from fire; and requesting the adoption of measures to prevent the further progress of these evils. A Commission was in consequence appointed to investigate the case, and "to make a selection of such records as it may be expedient to print under the authority of Parliament." In carrying out this purpose the Commission, as a matter of course, assumed the important work of Rymer as a basis; the *desideratum* being, "to have this work completed by a supplementary selection of such other important papers as were omitted by the original compilers." This was the task assigned to Dr. Clarke, who was recommended to the commissioners by the Speaker of the House of Commons, and by another member, who knew him through his works.

When the Doctor was applied to by Mr. Cayley, the secretary to the Commission, although disposed to refuse the offer entirely, yet, from a sense of duty, he felt bound to give such an application respectful consideration. In

order to this, he consulted his brethren the preachers, at their usual meeting; but their counsel did not aid him very efficiently. One thought it would interfere with his ministerial duties; another, that it was a trick of the devil to prevent his usefulness; a third suggested, that it might be a providential call; and a fourth decided, that Wesley would have regarded it as a call which ought to be obeyed, and that therefore he should accept it without hesitation. At length, however, perplexed as he was, Dr. Clarke consented to undertake the task temporarily, and to do his best to promote the object of the Commission, until some other person should be found with more leisure to prosecute the work. In the fulfilment of this engagement, he presented a series of learned and elaborate reports; in the first of which he recommended that the investigation should not be limited to the time over which Mr. Rymer had travelled, but that it should be extended from the Norman invasion to the accession of George III.; and in suggesting the best means of effecting this object, it was stated that these records were to be found in the British Museum, the Tower, the Chapter-House, Westminster, the Rolls Office, the Privy Council Office, and the State Paper Office.

Dr. Clarke, although engaged at the same time in printing his Commentary, laboured in the service of this Commission for ten years, during which period he not only wrote the reports referred to, and conducted the preliminary investigations, but was enabled to carry nearly four volumes folio of these additional records through the press. He had twice sent in his resignation to the commissioners, but they declined to receive it, and urged his continuing the work. At length, in March, 1819, he again resigned, and accompanied his request to be relieved from this duty with such reasons

as induced the commissioners to comply with his request, in a manner which was honourable to this learned minister, and to the religious body with which he was associated. He felt this; and the connexional interest was from the beginning one of his motives in undertaking this severe labour. Writing, in March, 1808, to a friend on the urgent application of the commissioners, he says, "Well, I thought, for the honour of my God, and for the credit of my people, I will put my shoulder to a wheel deeply stuck in the mud, and raise it if I can."

His steady attention to his ministerial duties amid his severe literary labours.

Yet, although engaged in these severe literary labours, Dr. Clarke did not shrink from his ministerial duties. He regularly preached in the different chapels of his extended Circuit, besides paying due attention to the pastoral care of his people. In this latter duty, his practice was truly exemplary. In his pastoral visitation, he confined himself to its religious object; notwithstanding his highly social disposition, he never mixed up the current topics of the day with his Christian advice; but, in visiting the sick, the afflicted, or the unstable, steadily kept the great spiritual end in view, and limited his conversation to its attainment.

A. E. Farrar's labours and trials as a missionary to Holderness.

The prosecution of the Home Mission work, as at this time attempted in England, opened many interesting fields of labour, the narratives of which, if preserved, would be rich in interest; but most of them have passed away with the lapse of time, and with the death of those who participated in these toils and successes. In the list of these Missions, which were not this year entered as Circuits, we find Holderness, near Hull, supplied by Abraham E. Farrar. This Mission was formed by the advice, and assisted by the information and pecuniary aid, of Thomas Thompson, Esq., of Hull. It may be observed that Mr. Thompson was

specially interested in this locality, it being his native place. Here his father occupied a small farm; and finding this boy—to use his own words—"more fond of a book than of a spade," he obtained a situation for him in the family of William Wilberforce, Esq., from whence, by good conduct, talents, and industry, he rose to be the leading partner in the bank of Lord Carrington, and a member of Parliament. Mr. Thompson, having been brought under the influence of Methodism, wished its agency to be extended to the companions of his youth.

The inhabitants of this district at that time were wild and rude. Methodism was known to them only as a byword, and a subject for reproach. The labour was severe, and the work required not only great strength and energy, but much judgment, fortitude, and discretion. We should have thought, therefore, that some man inured to ministerial duty, and having some experience in the work of an evangelist, would have been appointed to such a sphere of Christian labour. On the contrary, however, it was assigned to a genteel, delicate youth of nineteen, who had been just admitted on trial, and to whom this was a first ministerial attempt. He, however, possessed piety, and talent, and courage sufficient to submit to the requisite self-denial to go through his work. Mr. Farrar tells us that on entering upon this enterprise, "the enmity of the carnal mind was strongly developed in forms of mortifying, and sometimes severe, persecution. Tin kettles and cows' horns were brought into requisition to drown the voice of the preacher; stones and other missiles were put into dangerous operation. The doors of the places in which the people assembled for preaching were fastened by ropes on the outside; sparrows having been first introduced to put out the lights, —a circumstance which was then, as in the primitive church,

The painful exercises and persecutions to which he was subjected.

made the ground of foul imputations. Burning assafœtida was occasionally blown upon the congregations. And at first the missionary very seldom passed on a Sabbath through a village without being followed by a mob of peasantry, crying, 'Culamite!' 'Bacon!' the first of these expressions being an allusion to some early obnoxious labourer in the country, whose 'name was cast out as evil;' the other, a railing epithet, founded on the pretended belief, that we caused bacon to be stolen, from the houses where we were entertained, and taken away in our saddle-bags! Patrington, Welwick, Burton Pidsea, Ottringham, and Roos were distinguished for proceedings of this character. In many places the opposition succeeded; and, persecuted in one village, the missionary sought refuge in another."

To Englishmen of the present day such accounts may appear inexplicable. On reading them, they will involuntarily exclaim, "Were there no magistrates in this part of the country?" Yes, there was some provision of this kind; but, unhappily, the only magistrate in this immediate district was the rector of Roos, than whom no one more heartily disliked the missionary, or his work. To him, however, the missionary applied for protection; but only obtained such a measure of reluctant justice, as tended to exasperate rather than to reform the persecutors; and, under the feelings thus engendered, the house in which the preacher was entertained, was assailed with volleys of stones, so that he was obliged to fly, and had a very narrow escape. This cruelty determined the missionary to apply to the justices in petty session for redress. In making this appeal, the youthful minister required countenance and advice; he rode scores of miles, and made many applications in the hope of obtaining help; but in

vain; for not a man could be found who would stand by his side in the day of trial. He went, therefore, alone. The principal farmers and landholders of Holderness were there on the other side. Colonel Grimstone was in the chair, and the rector of Roos on the bench. Mr. Farrar preferred his complaint, and fully stated his case. The colonel asked many questions, which allowed and, indeed, called for something from the minister like an apology for Methodism, and a statement of the legal protection to which its ministers and people were entitled. The rector of Roos had the mortification of listening to this, and, what was more, to a reprimand from his brother magistrates. The missionary's object was obtained; from that time open persecution greatly subsided.

The rector magistrate, however, remained of the same mind. If any one applied to him, a first question was, whether the party visited the conventicle; the answer pretty generally decided the case. On one occasion a good Methodist, a farmer, applied to him to suppress some noisy disturbances at Ottringham: the magistrate's answer was, that "he should employ a constable, and send the young vagrant preacher to the county jail, until which he would promise nothing." This denial of justice, however, was but a small part of the iniquity then perpetrated. On leaving the house, the dogs were *allowed* so to worry the old man, that for several weeks he was confined to his bed from the injuries thus inflicted on him. Nor was this wicked persecution all the difficulty that had to be encountered. Many of the people, indeed, showed the young preacher all the kindness in their power, and ministered to his comfort to the full extent of their means. Yet the accommodation he had on some occasions was of a

very miserable character. In one place, a bed never slept on, except when the preacher came, and kept in a deadly damp parlour, was his place of lodging: in another, a bed put on the bare beams over a wheelwright's shop, with boards just enough for him to stand on, and to which he ascended by a ladder, was his place of rest. Yet, the greatest difficulty was food; all the members were very poor. A retired farmer, in painful affliction, gave land, and a subscription toward the erection of a chapel; and, in his then state of feeling, offered a dinner to the preacher when he came. But, as he recovered, his kindly feelings passed away; and he behaved so roughly to his guest, that he frequently gathered his dinner from the autumnal hedges, rather than share his hospitality.

Mr. Joseph Marsh at Ulverstone.

The other Home Mission Stations were in many respects similar. Mr. Joseph Marsh was appointed to Ulverstone. He was a local preacher when but seventeen years of age, and was in two years afterwards called into the ministry; so that, like Mr. Farrar, he was appointed to that sacred office at nineteen, and his first Circuit was a Mission. At Ulverstone he was subjected to many difficulties and privations. Frequently exposed to inclement weather, without an opportunity of changing his clothes when wet, and occasionally having to sleep in damp beds, he contracted a painful disorder, from which, more or less, he suffered through life.*

Yet, despite all this opposition and these difficulties, the cause prospered; Methodism prevailed. The ground over which that young minister travelled as a missionary has been cultivated, and has since been formed into two entire Circuits. Almost every village has its neat chapel, and its

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1848, p. 708.

Sunday-school: and from this soil, formerly so barren, men have been raised up to go forth into heathen lands to preach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus.*

Progress of religion among pious soldiers at the Cape of Good Hope.

We have already had to notice some very pleasing evidence of the power of religion among the soldiers at Southampton, the Channel Islands, and other places. It was a pious band of these, numbering about fifty, which from year to year appeared on the Minutes, and called for the appointment of a missionary to Gibraltar. A similar case occurred about this time at the Cape of Good Hope, which strikingly shows the vital energy of the Gospel. The Cape of Good Hope was now an important military station, several regiments being quartered there. After a while one or two religious men began to inquire whether there were any others like-minded with themselves. A brief inquiry exhibited a very pleasing result. About thirty-four men were found in the 93rd Regiment, most of whom had been brought to a knowledge of salvation by the instrumentality of Mr. Armstrong, the Methodist preacher in Enniskillen, Ireland. In the 21st Light Dragoons five Methodists were found, the spiritual children of Ouseley and Graham, the Irish missionaries: three or four others were discovered in the 21st Foot, and in the 72nd. Having thus obtained some little knowledge of each other, they desired to have more direct religious intercourse. They proceeded at first to build a little hut, in which to hold meetings for prayer. And after a while they found in the town a large room belonging to some Quakers, which, on speaking to the proprietors, they were allowed to use six days out of the seven. Here they met for religious worship; and George Middleton, of the 72nd, frequently exhorted, and after some time began to preach. They

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1849, p. 283.

formed Class-meetings, held lovefeasts, and established amongst themselves, as far as their means would extend, all the privileges of a little Society. After a short season, some few began to disturb their brethren with questions of "doubtful disputations." As peace could only be obtained by such a measure, these were expelled; and the remainder became more united and influential than before; their numbers increased, they grew in grace, and went on their way rejoicing in God.

Misrepresentations in the Hibernian Society's Report lead to a fuller statement of Methodist progress in Ireland.

Some statements which had been published in the Report of "the Hibernian Society for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge in Ireland," led to a fuller exhibition of the character and extent of Methodist operations in that country than had previously been published. In this Report, it had been publicly asserted that the province of Connaught, which comprehends several counties in the west of Ireland, "seems to be the most destitute of religious instruction of any part of Ireland;" that "only two ministers in all that extensive district are reported as known to preach the Gospel." "The province of Munster" is said to be, next to Connaught, the most destitute of religious knowledge; while "in the counties of Waterford, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Wexford, and Carlow, only seven persons are known to preach the Gospel. The proportion of Papists to Protestants in these counties is twenty to one. Scarcely any of the former, and but few of the latter, possessed copies of the Scriptures."

There can be no doubt that these statements were grossly incorrect, as it respected the clergy of the Established Church, many of whom lived and preached the Gospel. They were equally unfounded in their bearing on Methodism. The number of members of Society in that kingdom at the time exceeded 23,000; the number of

stated hearers was over 100,000. Between 90 and 100 preachers regularly ministered to those Societies and congregations; and these were assisted by upwards of 500 local preachers. Besides all which, there were at the very time ten missionaries engaged in travelling through the identical districts which are thus pointed out as so very destitute. If, as was very likely the case, the authors of this "Report" did not regard any as preaching the Gospel, who did not make "absolute unconditional election and reprobation" prominent in their discourses, neither the Methodist preachers, nor many of the pious clergy, were likely to be included. The allegation respecting the paucity of copies of the Scriptures led to an application being made, as to the accuracy of this part of the Report, to a respectable and intelligent gentleman in Ireland, fully competent to give evidence on the subject. The following is his reply:—"Messrs. —— spoke of matters with which they are unacquainted. I know the state of the Methodists in Ireland something better than they do; and I do not know a Methodist family without the Old or New Testament. Indeed, at this moment, I know not a family without both. Some years ago, it is true, Bibles were very scarce in Ireland; but since the Association Bibles have been circulated, our friends have all supplied themselves, or been supplied." *

The Conference of 1808.

The Conference of 1808 was held in Bristol on July 25th; James Wood president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The Circuits were now 236 † in number, an increase of 19. The following changes were made:—Collumpton and Reeth ceased to be Circuits, and the following places

* "Methodist Magazine," 1807, p. 89.

† The Minutes give 238, including the Mission Stations of Gibraltar and Sierra Leone.

were made Circuits, viz., Margate, Luton, Littleport, South Petherton, Exeter, Monmouth, Crickhowel, Caerphilly, Lampetre, Llandilo, Neston, Namptwich, Stafford, New Mills, Addingham, Bingley, Bakewell, Richmond, Newtown-Barry, Clough-Jordan, Innishowen, Ballina. Besides the Home Missions included in the list, and numbered as Circuits, the following were separate Mission Stations, each supplied with one preacher, but not reckoned in the number of Circuits:—Ipswich, Thomas Morgan; Romney, William Hollis; Hertfordshire, George Rowe; Essex Mission, Francis Brooks Potts; Cirencester, John Voce; Saul Mission, Richard Renshaw; Ludlow, John Rigg; Husbands Bosworth, John Smith, Jun.; Whittlesea, Joshua Bryant; Ulverstone, John Rawson. The resolution of the last Conference for arranging the Missions into Districts, had been carried into effect. In the West Indies, we find the Antigua District with five Circuits; the St. Christopher's with four; Jamaica, and two other Circuits, are grouped together, but not called a District; Nova Scotia and New Brunswick formed a District consisting of two Circuits. The number in the Societies of Great Britain and Ireland this year was 151,145, an increase of 8,043 in the year. In British America and the West Indies the numbers were 14,796, being a decrease of 84.

Its transactions.

Leave was given for the erection of 129 chapels, and for making collections for 61 chapels which were needy. A Committee was also named to look out for ground for a school near Leeds, when the number of boys at Kingswood should amount to fifty. A proposal was submitted by this Conference to the ensuing District Committees, for establishing a Chapel Fund with a treasurer in each District, from which the needy chapels might be relieved. A suggestion was thrown out, intimating

the importance of establishing a Tract Society, to be co-extensive with the Connexion; and the Book Committee in London were desired to draw up a plan for its organization. The thanks of the Conference were voted to Mr. Robert Lomas, "for his very laborious, faithful, and successful services" in the Book Room; and to Mr. George Story, for his long and faithful services in the printing office. Mr. Lomas was also requested to accept the office of general auditor of all the accounts, with authority to procure such assistance as he might judge necessary. Mr. Thomas Blanshard was appointed book-steward.

Dr. Clarke's name appears on these Minutes as supernumerary in the London West Circuit, with a foot-note stating that the appointment was made at his request. This step was taken not because Dr. Clarke wished to retire from the work of the ministry, nor altogether because he had lost the strength necessary for an efficient discharge of its duties. His health had certainly failed, in some degree, under the severe pressure of his arduous and harassing engagements. He therefore very naturally felt desirous of some arrangement by which to have a measure of rest; but in this, as in most other instances, the course was taken rather in compliance with the earnest wish of his friends, than from any strong desire of his own. Just at that time the Surrey Institution, which had been formed on a liberal and highly respectable basis, was about to collect a library. Mr. Butterworth felt an interest in this establishment, and was very anxious that the collection should be formed under the influence of the highest bibliographical knowledge, and with a due regard to the interests of revealed religion. He saw in his friend and relation, Dr. Clarke, a man every way qualified for this important work;

Dr. Clarke librarian of the Surrey Institution.

and believing that his aid would immensely serve the interests of this establishment, and through it the learning and religion of the metropolis, and that, at the same time, it would afford him sufficient rest and relaxation, he most strongly urged Dr. Clarke to accept the office of librarian of this institution. After much hesitation and entreaty, he, on these grounds, accepted the office, and, in consequence, requested to be set down on the Minutes as supernumerary. He filled the office that year, but never felt quite at home, and left it at the ensuing Conference, refusing to receive any remuneration for his services. We accordingly find him the following year on the London West Circuit, as a regular minister, and chairman of the London District.

Persecution revived in Jamaica.

In the latter part of the year 1807, the Jamaica legislature, undismayed at the failure of their former attempt at intolerance, again attempted to secure their object; and it must be admitted that the effort now made was characterized by great ingenuity. The new statute began by recommending to all proprietors of slaves the instruction of them in the principles of the Christian faith, and then proceeded with the prohibitory and penal part, thus:—"Provided, nevertheless, that the instruction of such slaves shall be confined to the doctrines of the Established Church in this Island; and that no Methodist missionary, or other sectary, or preacher, shall presume to instruct our slaves, or to receive them into their houses, chapels, or conventicles, of any sort or description, under the penalty of twenty pounds for every slave proved to have been there, and to be recovered in a summary manner before any three justices of the peace."

The flimsy pretence of caring for the Negroes' instruction which this statute exhibits, is sufficiently transparent. There is no penalty for keeping these poor creatures in utter ignorance; this might be done with impunity; and

was in fact done by its operation, as it limited their instruction exclusively to a class who at that time had neither the means, nor the will, to give the instruction which was wanted; whilst, on the other hand, those who were able and willing to supply this want efficiently, were to be punished summarily if they dared to do so. The manner of dealing with this law by the colonial authorities was as disingenuous and dishonest, as its character was iniquitous. The silenced missionaries immediately informed Dr. Coke of what had taken place; the Committee of Privileges accordingly met, and petitioned the king in council to disallow this persecuting measure. They were informed, in reply, that the government at home had not heard of such an edict. The Jamaica authorities, dreading the fate the measure might receive in England, delayed transmitting it till the last hour the forms of their government allowed; so that, when again in 1808 a further petition was presented, the same reply was received. The government, of course, could not deal with a statute, of the existence of which they had no official knowledge. At length, however, the obnoxious enactment arrived, accompanied by an agent sent to enforce on the home authorities the necessity of the measure. The effort was vain. On the 26th of April, 1809, a note from Lord Bathurst informed Dr. Coke that the law was disallowed. Grateful as all were for this issue, the evil which had accrued was fearful. More than eighteen months the poor Negroes had been kept in a famine of the word,—without religious instruction, preaching, or prayer. Sixteen months of Dr. Coke's time had been mostly consumed in incessant efforts to obtain liberty for these oppressed Negroes to worship God, before his efforts were crowned with success.

And again forbidden by the king in council.

The simple truth of the Gospel, as held forth by

Striking instance of a sinner's salvation by faith, in contrast with Pharisaism.

those who preached it, was everywhere the savour of life to broken-hearted sinners; and just as frequently a stumbling-block to those who, like the Pharisees of old, "trusted in themselves that they were righteous." The following affords a striking illustration of both these truths. Mr. Howard was a banker of Dublin, of great reputation and good property. Persons therefore eagerly committed their savings to his care; and for a while he seemed to conduct his business with great propriety. At length, he most unwisely began to speculate. At first his own means were equal to meet his risks; by degrees, however, the property of others was placed in requisition. The usual consequence followed, Mr. Howard was ruined; and the ruin which so deservedly overwhelmed him, involved a wide circle of innocent victims who had confidingly placed their property in his hands. Compelled by these circumstances to leave Ireland, he came to England, and lived in obscurity. In this state he wandered to Hull, and was led to hear the Rev. Joseph Milner preach. The word came to his heart with power; conviction of sin, and deep compunction for the misery which he had caused, overwhelmed him. At length he resolved to go to the minister, and tell him all his case. He did so, inquiring what he must do to be saved. The preacher read to him from the third chapter of the Romans, and opened up to his mind the way of salvation by faith. Hope dawned in his soul. As he returned, he doubted whether the words he had heard were really in the Scriptures; and feared they were taken from some work on divinity, as suitable to his case. On reaching his lodgings he eagerly got a Bible, and turned to the part named, where he found indeed what exactly met his case. As he read, he sank on his knees, and implored that salvation which cometh not from the law,—"For by the law is the knowledge of

sin,"—but "which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference." This was the salvation he needed; for this he prayed, for this he believed. He wrestled with the Angel of the Covenant, and rose from his knees happy in the pardoning mercy of God. Mr. Howard afterward wrote a short account of his life, for the warning and encouragement of others. He did not extenuate his transgressions, but showed the evils by which he had fallen, and the great salvation which he had received.

Mrs. Blachford of Dublin (mother of Mrs. Henry Tighe, the accomplished author of "Psyche") was a lady of eminent sense and piety, of whom Wesley said, "She is one of our jewels." She lived with Dr. Radcliffe, one of the judges of the Irish Prerogative Court, (who had married a sister of Mr. Blachford,) and another sister of Mr. Blachford, who was unmarried, and in a very declining state of health. Dr. Radcliffe was strictly moral and religious in all external observances, and sincere and upright in his character; but he did not like the spiritual profession of Mrs. Blachford, which was designated "Methodism." As Miss Blachford became worse, the kind attentions of the brother-in-law and of the sister-in-law were called forth on her behalf. The doctor used to go to her chamber every morning before going to court, and read the service for the sick out of the Book of Common Prayer; and Mrs. Blachford would frequently converse with her on the promises and privileges of the Gospel, and endeavour to lead her mind to the experience of salvation; and as her hopes of success increased, she occasionally observed to Dr. Radcliffe, "She will die a Methodist."

While they were going on thus, "one morning, after the doctor had, as usual, been reading prayers with Miss Blach-

ford, just as he was about to repeat the Lord's Prayer, she said, 'Stop, doctor; before you read that prayer, I wish to say a few words.' The doctor, who was naturally a nervous man, was much disturbed by the interruption; but Miss Blachford continued,—all the family kneeling round the bed, and Mrs. Blachford, as usual, having gone thither to attend the family devotion: the sick lady spoke to the following effect:—'Last night, as I was for hours unable to sleep, I lay contemplating my religious state; I prayed to God over it; and whilst thus engaged, I felt the power of God present to my mind, enabling me, in a manner I never felt before, to claim Him as my "Father who is in heaven;" and I rejoice still in this holy assurance. And now, doctor, read to me that prayer.' With much feeling the doctor finished the service, and then instantly quitted the room. Mrs. Blachford followed him, saying, 'I told you, doctor, she would die a Methodist; this is Methodism.'"

About this time the pamphlet above mentioned, containing Mr. Howard's account of his Life and Conversion, "fell into Dr. Radcliffe's hands, when he began reproaching Mrs. Blachford for the Methodism of Mr. Howard, saying it was a refuge for the vilest characters, when they could go no further. He then took up the book, and began reading it: as he read, he said aloud, 'Well, it is so far well; he does not hide his faults, but confesses them freely; that looks well.' He continued the narrative: when he came to that part of it giving the account of his visit to Mr. Milner, he was affected; and, on concluding the whole, when he stated his sense of the pardon of sin, Dr. Radcliffe rose hastily from his chair, and, dashing down the book, exclaimed, 'How is this? Here have I been doing my duty and serving God all my life, and I have never felt

this peace;' and he went away much displeased." Mrs. Smith, who has given us this account, observes with equal truth and beauty, "A fine illustration this of the parable of the prodigal son,—'Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends!' (Luke xv. 29.) 'What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at the stumbling-stone. As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed.' (Romans ix. 30–33.) And again, 'He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance!'" *

Pitiable condition of worn-out Methodist preachers.

We have given in a preceding chapter the efforts made by Dr. Clarke and Mr. Henry Moore for improving the Annuitant Fund, so as to provide some adequate support for the preachers, when incapable, from age and infirmities, of continuing in the discharge of the laborious duties of a Circuit preacher. To some small extent they appear to have temporarily succeeded in this benevolent enterprise. Yet the results were far from being satisfactory, as we learn from the case of George Lowe, who this year retired from active service, and became a supernumerary in the Shrewsbury Circuit. This excellent minister had broken up his establishment at Haddington, which yielded him a comfortable maintenance, to enter into the service of the Methodists as one of their ministers. To

* Mrs. Smith's "Life of Henry Moore," pp. 206–209.

that service he devoted twenty years of severe labour; yet, when unable any longer to bear the burden and discharge the duties of an itinerant life, his only resource for daily bread, beyond the casual benevolence of his Christian friends, was about five shillings weekly,—the fruits of his personal contributions to the Preachers' Annuitant Fund. On this humble pittance he would have subsisted in pious contentment, had not a mysterious Providence thrown on his care three orphan grandchildren for education and support. Yet, so mysterious are the ways of Providence, these very children "were destined to be the companions of his declining years, to administer to his comfort, and to close his eyes in death." The bringing up of these children, however, was a very heavy charge on this aged minister, and frequently brought him into great difficulty. He sent the two boys to school, and afterward apprenticed them to a respectable silk-master, to be brought up to the silk trade. He promised to pay a premium of thirty pounds with each, and in consequence of these engagements was frequently brought into great difficulties. When the payment of the first thirty pounds approached, various afflictions and claims had so diminished his funds, that he had but a few pounds left. As the day appointed for the payment approached, he was brought into great distress; and, having no other resource, cried mightily to God. Yes, "this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." A few mornings before the money was actually due, the postman brought him a letter, the postage of which was one shilling and eightpence. He hesitated to take it, saying, "It is a large sum to pay for a letter;" but the postman encouraged him, saying, he was sure there was something in it, as it was the charge for a double letter. He

Piety of George Lowe in old age, and providential interposition in his behalf.

paid the money, opened the letter, and found it to contain a Bank of England note for twenty pounds, from "a Christian friend in London, whose name he was not to know till the morning of the resurrection." He laid the letter, with its contents, before God, and with a grateful heart thanked Him for this succour in a time of need. Nor was this the only interposition of the kind which this good old man experienced. Afterward, when brought into great straits, he received a remittance "from an unknown friend in the Shrewsbury Circuit, which supplied his necessity." *

The continued progress of Methodism produced a profound sensation amongst different classes of persons in the country, who, although divided from each other by various shades of opinion and feeling, were united in opposition to the spread of the doctrines and principles which gave rise to Methodism, and contributed to its continued progress. Besides the enmity of the carnal mind to spiritual religion which naturally pervaded the population, there were other antagonistic influences roused into action, tending to check the progress of a sect which was intensely disliked. Of these, perhaps, the formal old-fashioned Church people may be considered the leading class. They regarded Methodism as an uncalled for novelty; a system of opinions which outraged all the proprieties and forms of the sterling, orthodox national faith, was dangerous alike to the stability of Church and State, and ought to be proscribed. Much of the deadly antipathy with which Methodism had been regarded by the avowed infidelity of preceding years, now that its profession and pretensions had been somewhat lowered by the events which had occurred in France, was taken up and maintained by what aspired to rank as the highest literature of the country. In

* STRACHAN'S "Life and Times of George Lowe."

common with these classes, the vicious and wicked regarded Methodism and its professors everywhere with aversion.

Yet it was with each and all of these a difficult question as to the means by which their desires could be accomplished. Brutal violence had been tried on an extensive scale, but it had signally failed to effect its object, although it succeeded in inflicting a vast amount of evil and injury. Yet "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew."

Grave thoughts and serious consultations had been held, with a view to interpose some barrier to the onward course of this hated cause, in the way of legislation. For this purpose the services of that able and energetic member of the Commons' House of Parliament, Mr. M. Angelo Taylor, had been secured; but he was too candid, and too open to conviction, to serve the intended purpose. On receiving information as to the real merits of the question, he altogether retired from the position which he had intended to occupy. The difficulties of dealing with the case were greatly increased by the fact, that the opponents of evangelical religion clearly saw that something more was necessary than to crush the Methodist Connexion, properly so called. For although this body was regarded as the parent of all the evils complained of, the Calvinistic Methodists, and the evangelical clergy and members of the Established Church, were classed with them as mischievous auxiliaries. Hence, the "Edinburgh Review" of that day, referring by name to these three denominations, says, "We shall use the general term of 'Methodism' to designate these three classes of fanatics, not troubling ourselves to point out the finer shades and nicer discriminations of lunacy, but treating them all as in one general conspiracy against common sense and rational orthodox Christianity."

In this spirit it was attempted to write down Methodism, or, at least, so to impregnate the public mind with misconception and prejudice respecting it, as to prepare the way for some legislative measures tending to its repression. The most vigorous efforts were put forth to effect this object. Visitation Sermons and Bampton Lectures were not only placed in requisition, but reviews and pamphlets, the highest and the lowest of literary agencies, combined in this confederacy. We accordingly find clergymen, in published sermons, lamenting "the excess of religious toleration," and the "Edinburgh Review" denouncing Methodism, as "at work upon the destruction of the orthodox churches." These labours and efforts were persevered in, until the attempt was fairly made to crush the progress of evangelical religion by the legislative coercion of Methodism. Of this attempt we shall have to speak in due time. We refer to the subject thus by anticipation, in order to place upon record the important fact, that however the attack, when it was made, was ostensibly directed, the object aimed at was the extinction of evangelical religion. Whether Calvinistic or Arminian,—whether in the Church or out of it,—all these classes of "fanatics" were ranked by the advocates of these measures as comprehended under the same category, as engaged "in one general conspiracy against common sense and rational orthodox Christianity."

CHAPTER V.

FROM THE CONFERENCE OF 1809 TO THAT OF 1813.

THE Conference of 1809—Its Transactions—Rapid Spread of Methodism in America—Case of Mr. Orpe—Progress of Methodism—Remarkable Answer to Prayer in the Case of Mr. Bramwell—Mr. Benson begins his Commentary—Continued literary Opposition to Methodism—The Conference of 1810—Obituary of Preachers—Transactions of the Conference—The "Quarterly Review" on Methodism—A Barrister's Pamphlet on evangelical Preaching—The Reviewer's Reply—The Reviewer's Misrepresentations and Perversions—Lord Sidmouth introduces his coercive Bill into the House of Lords—Intense Alarm produced in the Country—Extensive Opposition offered to the Measure—Fearful Consequences which its Success would have inflicted on evangelical Religion—The threatened Evil fully seen at the Time—The Opposition successful, and the Bill rejected—First Intimacy between Mr. Bunting and Mr. Watson—Dr. Adam Clarke visits Ireland—Preaches in different Parts of the Country—And presides at the Irish Conference—Important Measures adopted—Continued Persecution in the West Indies—The Conference of 1811—Its Transactions—Obituary of Preachers—Attempts to wrest existing Laws for the Persecution of Methodism—Vexatious and hazardous Nature of these Struggles—Necessity for an Alteration of the Law—An Act, fully meeting the Case, prepared and passed—Mr. Jabez Bunting appointed Superintendent of Halifax—His early Life, and Rise to Eminence—The Chapel at Halifax enlarged—Trouble with the Luddite Rioters there—Mr. Daniel Isaac similarly harassed at Shields—Sierra Leone—The Origin of the Colony—And of the Mission to it—The Conference of 1812—Its Transactions—Mr. Richard Watson again received into the Methodist Ministry—And appointed to Wakefield—Voyage of the Missionaries to Sierra Leone—Their Reception, Labour, and Success—Attention called to the Importance of Missions to India—Dr. Coke zealously prosecutes Inquiries on the Subject—A cruel Act of Intolerance punished—Gracious Revival at Bath—Conversion of Mr. Charles Penny.

The Conference of 1809.

THE Conference of 1809 was held at Manchester, July 31st. Mr. Thomas Taylor (who had filled the same high office thirteen years before) was appointed president, and Mr. Joseph Benson secretary. The number of Circuits in Great Britain and Ireland, at the close of this Conference, was 257, being an increase of 21 on the number in the preceding year. The following changes took place:—Llangollen and Innishowen ceased to be Circuits; while Harwich, Bungay, Brackley, Shaftesbury, Pool, Liskeard, Tavistock, Neath, Caerfryddyn, Holyhead, Llanfyllyn, Llanrwst, Ludlow, Ilkestone, Melton Mowbray, Driffield, Ayr, Perth, Banff, Pettigo, and Carrickfergus became Circuits. John Waterhouse was received on trial at this Conference. The number of members in the Societies of Great Britain and Ireland was at this time 158,021, being an increase on the year of 6,876; and in those of British America and the West Indies, 13,629, being a decrease of 1,065. Collections were ordered to be made within certain prescribed limits on behalf of 81 needy chapel trusts. The obituary of preachers this year includes the names of ten, all of them young men, except Mr. Joseph Thompson, who had travelled thirty years, and was in the seventy-seventh year of his age. He died as he had lived, rejoicing in Christ Jesus. Of William Vipond, one of the others, a very high character was given, as having been eminent for piety, ability, and zeal.

Its transactions.

The following measures were adopted, to render "the income of the Connexion more adequate to its large and increasing expenditure." Thirty pounds was declared to be the maximum amount to be granted to any Circuit to aid in furnishing any one house. It was ordered that in every Quarterly Meeting the salaries of the preachers' wives should be first paid, before any other demands were

discharged. It was enjoined on the preachers, that after the Yearly Collection had been made in the Classes, the object and importance of that collection should be explained to the principal congregations, that those who felt disposed might have an opportunity of contributing towards it by sending their donations to the superintendent. It was required, under the penalty of censure, that every chairman of a District should at each District Meeting inquire into the financial state of the several Circuits in his District, particularly into the average amount of their weekly and quarterly contributions; that he might be able, when called upon, to report the same to the Conference.

It was also enacted, that before the deficiencies brought from any Circuit were paid at the District Meeting, inquiry should be made whether such Circuit had complied with the established rule respecting contributions, by raising on the average one penny per week, and one shilling per quarter, for each member. And in every case wherein this rule had not been complied with, it was directed that the payment of the deficiencies of such Circuit should be deferred, and the case be reported to the Conference for decision.

The pecuniary difficulty resulting to Circuits from the great inequality of preachers' families, led to the adoption of the following minute:—"It is agreed that the District Meetings shall make inquiry into the number in Society, and the circumstances of the respective Circuits in their Districts; and shall draw up a plan to be presented to the next Conference, stating how many children ought in equity to be provided for by each Circuit." This information was asked for, as the means of supplying the Conference with materials for drawing up a general plan

for apportioning the cost of the children in an equitable manner among the Circuits.

It having been found that the rule respecting the division of Circuits had been rigidly construed, so as to prevent even minor alterations in their boundaries; it was at this time expressly declared, that "the boundaries of Circuits may be regulated, and partial alterations made, without dividing them or making any new Circuit; and such arrangements the District Meetings have authority to make, subject, however, to the decision of Conference, if there be any appeal against them." *

In the preceding year, the Irish Conference had laid down a rule to the effect, that if any Methodist preacher married any woman who had a parent living, whatever her age, without the consent of such parent, he should be suspended or expelled. Or in the case of a woman under age, with no parent living, but having a guardian, the consent of such guardian should be held equally indispensable. These Minutes led the attention of the English Conference to this subject, which, after due consideration, affirmed the following propositions:—That, in general, a woman ought not to marry without the consent of her parents; but that, under certain circumstances, a woman may not only be justified, but even ought to marry without such consent; but that, in such a case, a Methodist preacher ought not to be the husband.

The rule prohibiting improper persons from taking out licences to preach was re-enforced with increased stringency.

The religious instruction of children and servants by catechizing, or other efficient means, statedly, and as a regular religious duty, was strongly urged on the heads of

* Minutes, vol. iii., p. 92.

families. The preachers were earnestly desired to attend to the Methodist discipline, and to be particular that the sacred Scriptures should be regularly read in all congregations assembling for worship "in what are called canonical hours."

Rapid spread of Methodism in America.

The following extract from a useful work shows the remarkably rapid spread of Methodism in America:—"It is now just forty years since the first Methodist preachers were sent to America by Mr. Wesley; they came over in 1769. In the United States there are (1809) 324 Circuits, 589 preachers, and 163,038 members. During the same period of forty years, more than 3,000 local preachers were raised up amongst us. In the same year, (1809,) Bishop Asbury collected the names of those preachers that were then living, and in connexion with the Methodists. Their number was 1,640." *

Case of Mr. Orpe.

The ordinary operations of Methodism at this period were marked by the usual features of alternating success and defection. Many were still turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; while others, who had tasted the good word of life, turned again to folly and sin. An old man died in the course of this year, who was a remarkable instance of both these classes. Mr. William Orpe was converted to God, and called out by Wesley to preach, in 1764. He laboured in the ministry three or four years with much acceptance, and was greatly beloved by the founder of Methodism, and respected by the people. He was, however, induced in 1768 to depart from the work, and reside on his father's farm, where he married. By this means, he avoided a course of severe labour and painful exertion, and returned to a life of comparative

* Jesse Lee's "History of the American Methodists."

ease and competence; but he did not thereby secure happiness. On the contrary, he had the harrowing conviction that he had "departed from a work in which God had employed him." Nor did the evil terminate here. He gradually neglected his religious duties, lost his religion, and remained carnal and worldly for thirty years. Under the ministry of Mr. Edmondson he was, however, again awakened to a sense of his danger, sought the Lord with weeping and with supplication, and was restored to the Divine favour. He began again to call sinners to repentance, laboured usefully as a local preacher for ten years, and died in peace with God, in June, 1810.

Progress of Methodism.

It was thus that Methodism advanced, not by mighty causes operating with pomp, and exhibiting an appearance of great power; but by the godly efforts of individuals, whose fidelity and zeal instrumentally diffused the blessings of salvation, while the backsliding and apathy of others offered serious obstruction to the word of grace. On some occasions, indeed, causes apparently too insignificant for public notice were by the great Head of the church rendered the means of salvation to many. During this year, a godly widow, whose husband, a local preacher, had been removed by death, leaving her with a family of nine children, was induced, in consequence of her altered circumstances, to remove from Fraisthorpe, where she had previously resided, to a farm at Gransmoor, near Bridlington. No sooner was this step taken, than she sought to procure those religious privileges which she had previously enjoyed, and which she now so especially needed. There being no Methodist preaching in that place, she endeavoured to introduce it, and succeeded. The Lord blessed His word; a Class was soon formed, and, among others, a respectable farmer and

his wife were brought to a knowledge of the truth. These, in a short time, removed to Barmiston. In their turn, they found that village destitute of means of grace; but they soon succeeded in obtaining a place for preaching, and procuring the services of a minister. There, also, the word was crowned with success; a Class was formed, and many were brought to experience salvation. Thus, in the absence of any apparently potent instrumental agency, the work of God silently, unobtrusively, and almost imperceptibly, won its way, and extended its saving influence over the souls of the people.

It was under the pressing necessity created by a series of similar successes, that the people of Chelsea were at this time encouraged, and almost compelled, to enlarge their borders, by proposing the erection of the present commodious chapel in Sloane Terrace; a design which was forthwith carried into effect with promptitude and energy.

Remarkable answer to prayer in the case of Mr. Bramwell.

Frequent mention has been made in the preceding pages of the eminent piety and the great zeal and success of Mr. William Bramwell. But, hitherto, no notice has been taken of many remarkable, we had almost said miraculous, answers to prayer, which were realized by this devoted minister. We insert the following, relating to the period now under review, on the authority of members of his family: "Numerous cases of successful intercession are related of this period also. One, which seems well attested, refers to sergeant-major Thomas Riley, of the Dragoon Guards,—a man well known and highly esteemed amongst the Societies for his services in the pulpit. In the character of a spiritual warrior, he was accustomed to preach occasionally, and with such effect that the chapels were always thronged. The spectacle itself must have been extremely curious; for it was his practice to officiate

in uniform; and being a man of lofty stature and herculean strength, his appearance in the pulpit, where so few of his profession have ever been seen, was productive of no slight interest. In his capacity of temporal warrior, however, he was ordered to proceed to Spain with his regiment, then stationed at Sheffield. The soldier was troubled at the idea of a speedy, and perhaps final, separation from his wife and four children; and the good woman, on her part, was overwhelmed with grief at her approaching bereavement. Mr. Bramwell, who knew him well, and who offered his ready sympathies in the hour of distress, thought it possible that the orders of government might be neutralized by the interposition of God. To assist Riley, he applied to Heaven, instead of the Horse Guards. After many applications from day to day, he met the soldier and his wife at the house of a friend. It was the last night of Riley's stay; the next morning his regiment was to march, and the next month his corpse might probably be stretched on some of the bloody battle-fields of the Peninsula. Mr. Bramwell sat abstractedly for a while, struggling apparently with some inward perplexity. He could obtain no satisfactory answer to his entreaties. 'But after supper was over,' says the gallant soldier, 'he suddenly pulled his hand out of his bosom, laid it on my knee, looked me in the face, and said, "Brother Riley, mark what I am about to say: You are *not* to go to Spain!" "But the marching orders?" "Never mind: remember, I tell you, you are not; for I have been wrestling with God on your behalf, and when my Heavenly Father condescends in mercy to bless me with power to lay hold on Himself, I do not easily let Him go; no, not until I am favoured with an answer. Therefore, depend upon it, that the next time I hear from you, you will be settled in quarters."' The next morning, however, Riley's regiment

left Sheffield, with Spain for its prescribed destination; but he had not proceeded far before he learned that the order had been countermanded; it was *not* to go to Spain! The next time Mr. Bramwell heard from the soldier, it was to say, that the latter was settled in quarters on English ground, as predicted."*

Mr. Benson begins his Commentary.

The last Conference had requested Mr. Benson to write notes on the Bible, and in the beginning of October he entered on the task. But, when noticing this fact in his journal, he refers to the Book Committee as having it in contemplation to publish notes written by an eminent divine in the Connexion, and adds, "If they do, I shall not proceed with mine, and shall be eased of a task too great for me to undertake at my time of life." The utmost that was then intended by Mr. Benson, was the production of short notes for family use. The first portion was, however, received with so much favour, that the subscribers urged him to proceed with a regular Commentary; and the ensuing Conference uniting in the same desire, he devoted himself to the arduous task.

Continued literary opposition to Methodism.

Whilst Methodism was thus labouring for the conversion of the depraved, and the instruction of the ignorant, it was followed with equal perseverance by the most violent opposition and hostility. These malignant literary efforts were similar in kind and object to those previously alluded to. The first which now presents itself to our notice is contained in a Charge by the Archdeacon of Sarum. Lamenting the prevalence of Dissent, this learned ecclesiastic attributes it in part to the indifference to the duties of their high office which he ascribes to the clergy; and partly, also, to the conduct of sectarian preachers; for, he says, the "itinerant enthusiast," with his "eccentricities and irregularities," goes

* "Life and Ministry of the Rev. William Bramwell," p. 88.

on "with his work of conversion with zeal and perseverance." Whatever might have been the intention of the writer, it is certain, that such language was much more likely to bring the efficient proclamation of the Gospel into contempt, than to rouse the clergy of the Establishment to an adequate sense of their responsibility, and a zealous discharge of their duties.

The Rev. Josiah Thomas, rector of Street-cum-Walton, Somerset, pursued a similar course in his "Strictures on Subjects chiefly relating to the Established Religion," &c. In this pamphlet, after marvellous professions of candour and good-will, and saying that "he would much rather that his book should be universally reprobated and cried down, than that any truly good man, of any sect or party, should, by his means, suffer in person, in property, in character, or in mind," he asserts of persons who attend the meeting-house, "We know that a man not unfrequently, by going thither, if he do by chance forego the vices of men, adopts those of devils;" with much more of a similar kind.

But it was not merely the pamphlets of rectors, and the visitation charges of archdeacons, with which Methodism was assailed. The highest dignitaries of the Church, and the proudest literary oracles of the land, united in this persecution. At this time William Magee, D.D., of the University of Dublin, and afterward archbishop of that diocese, published a large and important work in two volumes octavo, under the title of "Discourses and Dissertations on the scriptural Doctrines of Atonement and Sacrifice." It might be supposed, that a valuable and learned work on these most important subjects would have been produced without containing any misrepresentation, or displaying hostility toward any communion of evan-

gelical Christians. We cannot believe that a person in Dr. Magee's position would deliberately and intentionally misrepresent the doctrines or opinions of any man: but, if this was not done, he certainly committed what was in effect an evil of equal magnitude; namely, pouring undeserved censure on a people, of whose religious principles and opinions he had neglected to acquire accurate knowledge. Yet he did this when he united Wesley's name with that of Dr. Priestley, as denying that all men have participated in the "universal taint" of human depravity. Dr. Magee's is not a more complete defence of the scriptural doctrines of atonement and sacrifice, than is Wesley's reply to Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, a logical proof of the scriptural doctrine of original sin. Of the same kind precisely is his representation that Wesley was indifferent to the religious opinions entertained by his followers; on which Dr. Magee dilates at length, dismissing it at last with the exclamation, "This, it must be admitted, is an excellent expedient for adding to the numbers of the sect."

It is not necessary at greater length to exhibit or refute the allegations which this learned divine so unjustly prefers against Wesley and Methodism. Their violence is their sufficient antidote. It is, however, necessary that the object for which all this extraneous matter was imported into a treatise on the doctrines of "atonement and sacrifice" should be made known. Nothing could appear more alien to the subject which the learned author had in hand, than any reference to Methodism. What had it, or Wesley, to do with his thesis? He, however, had an object in view, and he takes care to indicate his design with sufficient distinctness. Dr. Magee very well knew that many spiritually minded ministers and laymen in the Established Church deeply sympathized with Wesley in his

evangelical labours and successes, and rejoiced in the progress of Methodism after his decease. He of course felt anxious to mark their conduct with the brand of reprobation; and therefore says, "It is much to be lamented, that any of the friends of true religion have given countenance to such a perversion of its soundest principles. Examples have not been wanting of cases in which the clergy have been set aside in the work of religious instruction; whilst men who uphold the Wesleyan chimera of perfection, who openly reject the Liturgy and Articles, and oppose the doctrines of the Established Church, have been deemed fit objects of preference to the recognised religious teachers of the land." * But while the countenance of Methodist doctrine and of its teachers was deplored, and its termination earnestly desired, more stringent and effective means of checking what was regarded as the prevailing evil were desiderated. Hence the learned doctor adds:—"It is equally matter of wonder and concern, that a system, which no longer covertly, but openly and avowedly, works in continued hostility to the established religion, has not met with more effectual resistance from those who may be supposed to take an interest in the well-being of the Establishment." † This was the grand requisite. Methodism was to be resisted. The peril of the Establishment required it. Those who were supposed to take an interest in the well-being of the Establishment were looked upon as bound to interpose coercive measures: it was indeed "equally matter of wonder and concern" that this had not been more promptly and efficiently done.

It was not, however, the dignitaries or ministers of the Church alone who laboured to check the progress

* "Atonement and Sacrifice," vol. i., p. 162. Fourth Edition. 1816.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 160.

of Methodism, and to subject it to penal restrictions: that which aspired to be the highest literary authority of the land joined in these denunciations. The "Quarterly Review" was projected before the close of 1808, and the first number was published in February, 1809. It professed full allegiance to "Church and State," and avowed uncompromising hostility to all opponents of the monarchy and the Establishment. It cannot therefore be matter of surprise that with such a purpose, and without any clear recognition of spiritual religion, whilst it aimed at directing the moral and political opinions of the country, and indicating the course of its legislation, it should cast an evil eye on the progress of Methodism. It did this by various indirect allusions, but afterward in a manner which we shall have to notice.

The Conference of 1810.

The Conference of 1810 was held at London, and began July 30th. Mr. Joseph Benson was on this occasion, for the second time, chosen president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The judicious and zealous measures which had been adopted in respect of the Home Missions, favoured as these were with the Divine blessing, in common with the work generally, had from year to year led to such an extensive increase of Methodist ministrations, as called for a large addition to the number of Circuits. The list published in the Minutes of this year shows an aggregate of 280 in Great Britain and Ireland, being 23 more than in the preceding year. Higham Ferrers, Crickhowel, Caerfryddyn, Church Town, Pettigo, and Rathmelton ceased to be Circuits; and the following places became Circuits, viz., Leigh (Essex), Bletchingly and Farnham Mission, Hertfordshire Mission, Chichester, Towcester, Whitchurch, Wellingborough, Hungerford, Torquay, Cirencester Mission, Newport, Brecon

(Welsh), Merthyr Tydvil (Welsh Mission), Carmarthen (Welsh), Cardigan, Pwllheli, Evesham, Isle of Wight, Ormskirk, Burnley, Grassington Mission, Holmfirth, Ulverstone, Arbroath, Strannorlan, Newtownlimavady, and Armagh. The number of members in Great Britain and Ireland was at this time 166,006, being an increase of 7,985 over last year; and the Societies in British America and the West Indies now had 13,580, being a small decrease on the year.

Obituary of preachers.

The obituary of preachers presented to this Conference contained the names of eleven, all of whom died happy in God, most of them very triumphantly. Particular reference may be made to the following:—John Mason, who died in his seventy-eighth year. He was engaged in the full work of the ministry thirty-three years, until 1797, when he became a supernumerary, after which he preached as his failing strength and infirmities permitted. He was an acceptable and useful preacher, with an unblemished reputation. He had cultivated an acquaintance with an important circle of science, was well read in general and ecclesiastical history, and well acquainted with natural history, particularly botany, of which his knowledge was profound and extensive. He had also studied anatomy and medicine; and all these acquirements were made subservient to the illustration and inculcation of theological truth. "Nor could it ever be said," observes Dr. Adam Clarke, "that he neglected his duty as a Christian minister to cultivate his mind in philosophical pursuits. He was a Christian man; and in his life and spirit adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour. The decency, propriety, and dignity of his conduct, through the whole course of his life, were exemplary. And his piety towards God, and his benevolence toward man, were as deep as they were sincere."

John Leach, after labouring several years as a local preacher, was called to the ministry in 1773, and continued to discharge the duties of that sacred office with fidelity and success for thirty years. Unable any longer to continue in this laborious course, he employed his time as a supernumerary in preaching occasionally and visiting the sick, until he finished his course with joy.

John Allen travelled thirty-three years, with great acceptance and success, retired from the full work of the ministry in 1799, and died rejoicing in God, February 20th, 1810.

Transactions of the Conference.

Gibraltar was ordered to be placed on the same footing as one of the Home Circuits, with respect to appointments, removals, and a constant succession of preachers. The Missionary Committee were accordingly empowered to apply to any of the regular married preachers now at home to supply the place of Mr. William Griffith at Gibraltar, at the ensuing Conference; and, when the consent of any such preacher had been obtained, to make the necessary arrangements for carrying the same into effect. Further, a grant of five hundred pounds was made from the Mission Funds to aid the noble and generous efforts of the Society and friends at Gibraltar in the erection of a chapel there.

For facilitating the business of the Conference, the Stationing Committee was directed to meet in future a week before the meeting of the Conference; that the plan of the Stations might be prepared before the sittings began. Useful regulations were made respecting the audit of the accounts, and the work of other committees, which were intended to insure the preparation of the several reports for the opening of the annual assembly. The vigilant attention of the chairmen of Districts was directed to all

the particulars relating to candidates for the ministry, in order that they might be prepared with the most complete information respecting each person.

Upon inquiry, it was found that the discipline of the Connexion had in some respects been neglected in certain localities. Tickets had been given to persons who had ceased to meet in Class, and leaders had taken upon themselves to give notes of admission. Superintendents were directed to put an end to these irregularities.

The "Quarterly Review" on Methodism.

The efforts to write down Methodism, or at least to prepare the public mind for some means of coercing it, were continued this year with augmented virulence. The "Quarterly Review," in an article to which allusion has already been made, put forth all its strength to effect this object. It is true the attack was not in name directed against Methodism; the article was entitled, "On the Evangelical Sects." This piece was at the time attributed to the pen of Robert Southey, and was professedly a review of a pamphlet entitled, "Hints to the Public and the Legislature, on the Nature and Effects of Evangelical Preaching. By a Barrister." It is from no desire to meddle with literary filth and moral abomination, that we refer to these matters; but we regard it as a sacred duty to show to the present generation the extent to which the opinion was then held, that Methodism was the parent and most influential promoter of evangelical doctrines, and to exhibit the manner in which these doctrines and their promulgators were treated in this country fifty years ago.

A barrister's pamphlet on evangelical preaching.

The chief object of this barrister in his production was to show, "that the public depravity" (of which he produces a frightful numerical account from Mr. Colquhoun's "Treatise") "is in great measure owing to the doctrines of the

evangelical preachers." "They tell the people," he says, "that they may multiply their offences to any degree they please; that the seducer, the gambler, the drunkard, the prostitute, the sharper, the robber, may all proceed in their career of infamy; that their lives cannot be too impure, or their offences too aggravated; for that, when once the weapon of sin shall fall from their hands, they will not be precluded by this their long catalogue of crimes from the offered reward of the Gospel; for that the Gospel does not suspend its favour on the performance of any moral duties whatever.....The word of proclamation delivered weekly from the pulpit, and dispersed daily in cheap tracts to all degrees of society, is, to the seducer: 'You have betrayed many that once were innocent, and brought down many a father's grey heirs with sorrow to the grave; but add one more victim; *for your life cannot be too impure;* and then *take refuge in a Redeemer.*' To the robber: 'You have corrupted many an honest mind by your example, and ruined many an honest man by your villany; but your crimes cannot be too many, or too aggravated: commit one more fraud on the public, and then lay hold on the cross.' To the murderer: 'Your sins cannot be too great; dip your hands once more in the blood of your fellow-creatures, and then wash them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Such is the plain, distinct, intelligible language of evangelical teaching."

The reviewer's reply.

To this "wilful and malicious misstatement," as the reviewer very properly calls it, he makes a fair and tolerably satisfactory reply; but, having rendered this tribute to truth and honesty, and "fully and fairly admitted that Methodism produces great good," he proceeds to "show that it produces great evil also." It cannot, indeed, be said that this reviewer writes with the ignorance

which the censors of Methodism at that time usually displayed. On the contrary, he had evidently carefully inquired into the subject, and made himself tolerably acquainted with the discipline, doctrines, and general economy of the body. Yet, it is very evident that the article is a flagrant misrepresentation of Methodism, and a false and foul libel on its character and object. This result was perhaps occasioned by two concurring causes.

In the first place the reviewer, whoever he was, was unquestionably destitute of proper moral qualifications for the task he had undertaken. He comes forth to exhibit and characterize the constitution and operations of a religious body, which arose into existence from the burning zeal inspired by a deep experience of personal religion. And yet every page of this review clearly proves that, whatever else the writer might know, he was totally ignorant of the religion of the heart. Set a man whose ear never enabled him to learn a tune, to criticize music; or a person utterly devoid of taste, to point out the beauties and defects of a gallery of paintings; and you will obtain results sufficiently ridiculous and absurd. But these will not be comparable to the absurdity which issues from the attempt of any man destitute of Divine illumination, to understand, explain, and judge the requirements, nature, and fruits of real religion; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Hence, when this writer, able as he is, discusses the Bands and Class-meetings, lovefeasts and watchnights, preachers and people, of Methodism, without in any way recognising a work of grace in the soul, his opinions and conclusions are alike ridiculous and worthless.

The reviewer's misrepresentations and perversions.

But there is sufficient in the concluding part of this review to show that the writer was not simply concerned to elicit the truth respecting the subject under discussion; but that he wrote for an object;—not, as had been usual, to hold up Methodism to ridicule and contempt, although, in this respect, he could not altogether keep out of the beaten track, but was, as in despite of himself, drawn in to do something in this way; but his principal object was of a graver cast: he laboured to show that Methodism was opposed to the Church, and inimical to the state; and that its rapid progress was pregnant with serious danger to both.

For this purpose the doctrines and preaching of the Methodists are misrepresented, and then styled a "pitiable delusion, perilous in its consequences." Their union, organization, and isolation from other parts of the community, are dwelt on; and we are told that this is carried to such an extent, that "in proportion as they overspread the country, the very character of the English face is altered; for Methodism transforms the countenance as certainly as sottishness or opium;" that "they have already obtained as distinct a physiognomy as the Jews, or the Gypsies; coarse, hard, and dismal visages, as if some spirit of darkness had got into them, and was looking out of them." It is accordingly asserted, that "the Methodists already form a distinct people in the state, and the main object of their rulers is to keep up and strengthen the distinction."

These assertions being sustained by the most plausible perversions of Methodist institutions and teaching which the reviewer could command, he proceeds to point out some of the serious evils which are thus produced. We are accordingly told, that "no works in this country are so

widely circulated, and studied by so many thousand readers, as the Evangelical and Methodist Magazines; and that the bigotry, fanaticism, and uncharitableness of these publications are melancholy proofs of human weakness." "Of these publications" the reviewer has no hesitation in saying, "that they produce evil, great evil, nothing but evil; that they tend to narrow the judgment, debase the intellect, and harden the heart." "What then," it is asked, "must be the effect of a confederated and indefatigable priesthood, who barely tolerate literature, and actually hate it, upon all those classes over whom literature has any influence?" "To those classes," it is replied, "Methodism is not less injurious than it is beneficial to the rude and uncivilized orders; it acts upon them as a mildewing superstition, blasting all genius in the bud, and withering every flower of loveliness and of innocent enjoyment."

But it was not sufficient to state that Methodism was so bad in its nature, and calculated to produce so much fatal injury to the upper classes of society. The purpose of the writer made it necessary that he should show that there was in Methodism a disposition, a design, and that there would soon probably be a power, to accomplish all this. He accordingly proceeds to say, "That men of these feelings, this temper, and these principles, would persecute, if they had the power, no reasonable man can doubt." And this, the writer unblushingly declares, was contemplated by Wesley, and continued to be aimed at by his followers; for he says, "It is, indeed, apparent that, with whatever feelings Wesley began his career, it soon became the scope of his ambition to lay the foundations of a church which should rival, and finally supersede, the Establishment." It is, indeed, admitted, that "there are many, very many, good and pious members of the sect, who dream of no such

consequence;" but it is insisted, "That the governing heads are driving to this goal, seems unquestionable." And the reviewer would really have it believed that the Methodists, who had but yesterday been despised, persecuted, and trodden under foot, might soon have sufficient numbers and power to consummate their plans and purposes, by a fatal aggression on the civilized classes of society and the Established Church. To sustain this extravagant notion, he shows that the Connexion had increased from 29,406 members in 1770, to 109,961 in 1800, and was increasing at the rate of about 7,000 members *per annum;* and he then asks, as in deep concern, "How long will it be before this people begins to count hands with the Establishment?" and proceeds to say, "It is no light evil for a state to have within its bosom so numerous, and active, and increasing a party, whose whole system tends to cut them off from all common sympathy with their countrymen, and who are separatists, not in religious worship alone, but in all the ordinary observances of life." Lastly, it is attempted to give effect to all this by the atrocious insinuation, on the authority of some hand-bill, that the Methodists contemplated an alteration of the reigning dynasty!

This long and malignant libel on an inoffensive religious body is not now thus fully exhibited with the view of giving it any formal reply. On the contrary, it is evident that anything of this kind is altogether unnecessary. Most of the falsehood and misrepresentation which it contains, is so transparent as to bear its own confutation; while the unshaken loyalty of Methodism to the throne, and its sincere and friendly bearing toward the National Church during the half-century which has since elapsed, form an ample answer to the allegations of the reviewer. But

we have now to proceed to consider the determined attack on the institutions of Methodism, and the religious liberties of the country, to prepare the way for which the article that has been so fully noticed, with many others of less importance, was written and published.

Lord Sidmouth introduces his coercive Bill into the House of Lords.

This review was published in the "Quarterly" of November, 1810. On the following 9th of May, 1811, Lord Sidmouth rose, in the House of Lords, to move for leave to bring in a Bill, which he called, "An Act to explain and render more effectual certain Acts of the First Year of King William and Queen Mary, and of the Nineteenth Year of the Reign of his present Majesty, so far as the same relate to Protestant Dissenting Ministers." The reasons which the noble lord alleged for the introduction of the Bill, were in themselves quite sufficient to alarm all who felt concerned for the preservation of religious liberty. He stated that most of the Quarter Sessions had so construed the Toleration Act, as to feel bound to grant a licence to any applicant who was willing to take the oaths, and make the required declaration. This he deprecated as a great injury to religion. He contended that many, who had thus obtained licences, ought never to have been recognised as teachers of religion. He commended the decision of the Quarter Sessions of two counties, in refusing to grant any licence, except to a person in holy orders, or pretended holy orders, and who was the teacher or preacher of a congregation. The noble Lord closed his speech by alluding to the great increase in the number of Dissenting preachers which had taken place in the preceding few years. After an earnest protest against the measure from Lord Holland, which was seconded by Lord Stanhope, leave was given to bring in the Bill.

It is scarcely possible to refer to any single measure, in

Intense alarm produced in the country.

the history of our national legislation, which produced more intense or general excitement amongst the Methodist and Dissenting congregations, than this proposal. Two days after the announcement was made in the House of Peers, the Wesleyan Committee of Privileges met in the chapel at City Road, and passed a series of eighteen spirited and sensible resolutions. In these it was shown that the effect of the Bill would be to abridge the privileges of the regular preachers, to render it very difficult, if not impracticable, under its operation, to continue the religious services of local preachers and exhorters,—that it would greatly embarrass, and probably endanger the continuance of, Class and prayer-meetings,—and that, in other respects, the proposed Bill appeared fraught with such damaging consequences as to render it, or even any amendment of it, intolerable. A Sub-Committee was appointed to carry these resolutions into effect, but it was determined to send a deputation to Lord Sidmouth, to request him to withdraw his Bill, before any positive action was taken in opposition to it.

A deputation, with Thomas Thompson, Esq., M.P., at its head, accordingly waited on his lordship, and were most politely and courteously received. The noble viscount assured them of his willingness to receive any information or representation respecting the proposed measure. He accordingly gave attention to all they had to say, and allowed the Methodists full credit for usefulness, zeal, and loyalty; but when urged to withdraw the Bill, he intimated that he felt it to be his duty to leave the decision of the subject to the House of Lords.

Extensive opposition offered to the measure.

Nothing now remained but to give the measure the most strenuous opposition. For this purpose copies of the resolutions of the Committee were forwarded to every

Circuit, and petitions against the measure, as numerously signed as the limited time would allow, were requested to be forwarded with the utmost celerity. Meanwhile, Lord Erskine was waited on, and put in possession of the objections which the Methodist people felt to the proposed measure, and made acquainted with the injury which they anticipated from its operation. He gave the fullest attention to the case, consented to present the Methodist petitions to the House, and promised to oppose the Bill. Earl Grey and Lord Holland expressed a similar purpose.

Lord Sidmouth had purposed proceeding with unreasonable haste in attempting to carry the measure. The Bill was presented on the 11th of May, and the second reading fixed for the 17th. On that day Lord Stanhope moved that the second reading should be deferred to some future day. This motion was seconded by Earl Grey, and so far acceded to by Lord Sidmouth, that he fixed the 21st for the debate on the question. Meanwhile, the whole Methodist community were in a state of great and anxious concern. Means of transit and intercommunication were at that time not so rapid as at present; but every exertion was made to render the petitions as weighty and as numerous as possible.

Fearful consequences which its success would have inflicted on evangelical religion.

We shall never forget the excitement of that time, it being the first public measure which called forth our personal concern. The fervent and persevering prayers which were offered up to God for His interposition and blessing on the means employed, the earnest zeal and labouring diligence which were exercised on this cause, as they passed under our youthful eye, seem still present to the mind. Nor, as we regard the whole case from this distant point of time, can we consider these prayers and efforts as uncalled for. On the contrary, they now seem to have been justified and demanded beyond any thing that was then imagined. We

recall the life-long labours of Wesley; the self-sacrifice of his noble coadjutors; the expenditure of intellect, life, and money, which had been put forth throughout seventy years, to rear up the Methodist Connexion to what it was in 1810, and to make it a means for diffusing the light and power of the Gospel throughout all future ages; and we cannot but feel persuaded that all this hope for the future was involved in the fate of the Bill which at that time lay on the table of the British House of Lords. If that Bill had passed through Parliament, and received the royal assent, Methodism, which had flourished amid brutal persecution, and had increased in numbers and influence, although opposed by the pride of power, and the most bitter denunciations and invectives of the press, would have been crushed by an unjust and persecuting penal law; for the proposed measure would have supplied all the means of coercion which the bigoted and persecuting amongst the magistracy could desire. It would have superseded the work of mobs by closing the most numerous, and those the most necessary, means of grace throughout the Methodist Connexion. It would even have left nothing for semi-infidel pamphleteers, or rabid reviewers, to demand from the Government, for the purpose of checking evangelical religion, and of locking up the national mind, as far as this could be done by statute law, in cold, formal, lifeless orthodoxy.

We have no wish to exaggerate the importance of this struggle. But we honestly declare, that we look to it, more than to any other public event which has transpired in this country since the expulsion of the Stuarts, as involving the religious destinies of Britain. If any person should regard this judgment as extravagant, we simply request him to form his opinion, not from England as it is

now, but as it was then. We now see the Church of England, throughout all the sections of her clergy, with few, very few exceptions indeed, instinct with energy and earnestness. But where at that time was earnestness and energy to be found in the Church, except with those of the clergy who were stigmatized as Methodists and Evangelicals? Let such a person also bear in mind, that the opposition which a continued series of literary efforts provided to prepare the way for this measure, was not so much directed against the Methodists as a sect, as against evangelical religion. The article so recently and largely referred to from the "Quarterly Review" is "On the Evangelical Sects." That previously referred to from the "Edinburgh" plainly included the evangelical clergy of the National Church in the same condemnation as the Methodists. Yet who can doubt that it is to the aggregate exertions of these, in that Church and out of it, that we are, under God, indebted for the marvellous religious progress which has been seen in this country during the past half-century? Whence emanated that earnest manner of preaching, which places this century in such striking contrast with the past? Whence that anxiety to render preaching effectual by producing gracious results in the hearers? What has multiplied our Missions at home and abroad, and scattered Bibles broad-cast over this country and the world? We forbear. It is patent and undeniable that this great religious progress is mainly traceable to that portion of the religious community which these literary efforts were meant to write down, and which it was the object of this Bill to crush or destroy.

How then could the evangelical ministers who were at that time in the Church, few in numbers and feeble in power as they were, have borne up under the discouraging

influence of an Act of Parliament, which, having crushed all who sympathized with them beyond the pale of the Establishment, must afterward have fearfully reacted on them? How could religion be maintained and extended amongst the Dissenters or Methodists, if a pious peasant could not pray with his neighbours, nor a godly artisan give religious advice to a circle of friends, without having their qualifications scanned and judged by a magistrate, who perhaps would know no more of spiritual religion than of Sanscrit? If all these, and other very obvious considerations, are fairly weighed, it will be seen that the baneful import of Lord Sidmouth's Bill can scarcely be over-rated.

The threatened evil fully seen at the time.

Happily for the best interests of the country, the good men of that day did not leave us by their supineness to learn by bitter experience the extent of the interests involved. They exerted themselves nobly; so that when the appointed 21st arrived, they were prepared. The Methodist Committee not only circulated their resolutions in the Societies, but sent a copy to every member of the House of Peers whose address could be procured. But the judgment of the country was to be made known to their Lordships' House by petitions, such as could be obtained in only a very short time; yet the efforts thus put in requisition produced a singular, and at that time perhaps unprecedented, result. Lord Stanhope presented a petition signed by more than 2,000 persons, and said, if the Bill was persisted in, the petitioners, instead of thousands, would have to be counted by millions. Lord Holland and Lord Lauderdale each presented many petitions. Earl Grey presented 78; the Earl of Rosslyn, 25; Lord Erskine, 255; Lord Lansdowne above 100. The whole number presented was 629.

Lord Sidmouth, in a mild and conciliatory speech, moved

the second reading of the Bill. He was immediately followed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who began by declaring his utter abhorrence of religious persecution. He lamented the errors, as he thought them, of Dissenters; but admitted they had a full right to the possession of their religious opinions. He maintained that religious coercion was not only absurd and impolitic, but for all good purposes impracticable. He should have thought the Bill, both as explaining the Toleration Act, and as adapted to make Dissenting ministers more respectable, laudable; but the Dissenters were the best judges, and as they were opposed to it, he thought it unwise and impolitic to press the Bill against their consent. Lord Erskine, in an eloquent speech, moved as an amendment, that the Bill be read that day six months. He was followed on the same side by Lords Holland, Stanhope, and Grey; so that with a single apologetic remark from the Lord Chancellor, and a short reply from Lord Sidmouth, the amendment was carried without a division. The Bill was consequently lost, and that attempt to abridge the religious liberties of Englishmen utterly failed.

The opposition successful, and the Bill rejected.

We must not omit to mention, that it was the danger that threatened all the Non-conforming denominations from the introduction of Lord Sidmouth's Bill, which first led to an acquaintance between Jabez Bunting and Richard Watson. These were both at that time resident in Manchester, the former as a Wesleyan, the latter as a New Connexion, minister. It so happened that one Sunday, after the intention of Lord Sidmouth had been announced, both these ministers had been preaching at Stockport, and casually met as they were returning to Manchester in the evening. The projected measure naturally became the subject of conversation. They both concurred that if this Bill

First intimacy between Mr. Bunting and Mr. Watson.

passed, it would be ruinous to Methodism, and very damaging to the Dissenting interest generally. They therefore agreed that means should be taken to make the country aware of the dangerous character of the proposed enactment. At Mr. Bunting's request, therefore, Mr. Watson wrote a long, able, and earnest letter on the subject, which was published in the "Manchester Exchange Herald." This conversation between these great men led to a pure and lasting friendship, which was productive of much advantage to religion generally, and to the cause of Missions in particular, and was only terminated by death.

During this year the Kirkgate chapel, Bradford, Yorkshire, a noble and commanding structure, was built, and opened on Sunday, May 11th, 1811, by Messrs. Charles Atmore and Robert Newton. Connected with the chapel were two commodious houses as preachers' residences, with a spacious vestry, class-rooms, and a large burial-ground attached.

Dr. Adam Clarke visits Ireland.

Dr. Coke having declined to do so this year, Dr. Adam Clarke was appointed at the last English Conference to preside over the ensuing Conference in Ireland. Although this eminent minister was very desirous of revisiting his native country, a little unpleasantness arose, which very nearly prevented his fulfilling this appointment, even after it had been made. The publication of Dr. Clarke's Commentary had begun about this time; and it was eagerly, and very generally, subscribed for by the Methodists of Ireland. These, however, had, from the frequent visits and exertions of Dr. Coke on behalf of Irish Methodism, been led to regard that minister with very great affection and respect; and his Commentary had been very extensively read and approved by them. When, therefore, the first portion of Dr. Clarke's Bible made its

appearance, and it was seen that he had spoken of Dr. Coke's work as a mere reprint of Dr. Dodd's, and that the former was referred to with at least implied censure for not acknowledging whence he had derived his materials, they thought Dr. Clarke had treated their friend too harshly; and accordingly expressed themselves in strong terms on the subject, both in speaking and writing. Dr. Clarke replied to a gentleman who had written to him, and explained very faithfully the reasons which induced him to notice Dr. Coke's Bible in the manner he had done, and intimated his intention of withdrawing from his proposed visit. Happily, however, his objections were overruled; so that, accompanied by his brother-in-law, Mr. Butterworth, and his eldest son, he went over to Ireland, and made a brief tour in that country.

Preaches in different parts of the country.

The party left England toward the end of May, and reached Dublin on the 31st. Dr. Clarke availed himself of this opportunity to examine some ancient biblical MSS. in the library of Trinity College, and to prosecute some researches in connexion with the objects aimed at by the Record Commission. On Sunday, June 2nd, he preached twice to large congregations; several clergymen and collegians being among the number. On the following Tuesday the party left Dublin for a tour through the northern parts of the island, visiting every object of interest, and especially the scenes of Dr. Clarke's early life, and the locality where he was brought to a knowledge of salvation. In the course of this journey the doctor preached to large congregations at Dundalk, Charlemount, Dungannon, Cookstown, Ballymena, Lisburn, Lurgan, Portadown, Newry, and Dungarvan. In some of these places the congregations were crowded into the Methodist chapels; at others, larger buildings belonging to the Presbyterians were placed at

his disposal; at Ballymena, by the invitation of the rector, he preached in the church; and where such opportunities did not occur, the multitude would assemble in some convenient field, and there listen to the word of life. Dr. Clarke closes his account of his journey thus:—"I have ended my preaching pilgrimage, in which I have spent one whole month, and during that time I have travelled almost incessantly, proclaiming salvation to many thousands; and, during the last eight days, preached five times in the open air. Our Conference begins to-morrow."

And presides at the Irish Conference.

At this Conference Dr. Clarke was president, Matthew Lanktree secretary. Leave was given for the erection of ten chapels; but it was resolved that no leave should in future be given for the erection of a chapel, "until one half of the expense be first obtained." Several resolutions were passed for the purpose of improving the finances of the Societies, urging on the people a compliance with existing and long established rules. Measures were also devised for securing increased caution on the part of preachers in recommending candidates for the ministry; and for reviving quarterly fasts, quarterly watch-nights, and street and field preaching, wherever it might be practicable.

Important measures adopted.

But the visit of Dr. Clarke had a still more salutary effect in relieving the urgent distresses of the Irish preachers. The privations they had endured from the insufficient provision which had been made for their wants, and the unhealthy lodgings in which they were placed, were providentially made known at this time, and excited the sympathy of Mr. Butterworth, as well as of the doctor. A meeting of the principal friends of the Society in Dublin, with many from the country, was in consequence held; when the modesty of the preachers, who had suffered so long in silence, was greatly admired. A subscription was imme-

diately opened to relieve them; it was determined to draw up and circulate a plain statement of facts bearing on the case; and the friends throughout the country were invited to co-operate with those in Dublin. The result was that measures for ameliorating the condition of the Irish preachers were prosecuted with considerable zeal.

Continued persecution in the West Indies.

The continued decrease which has been noticed as occurring in the West Indian Mission, arose from the inveterate persecution to which the missionaries were exposed, notwithstanding the interference of the home government on their behalf. When his Majesty in Council disallowed the persecuting statute of Jamaica, information of the event was accompanied by the draught of a Bill, which the governor-general was desired to "take an early opportunity of proposing to the Assembly, to be passed into a law." But when this communication was made, on the meeting of the Assembly, they passed a resolution declaring that "any attempt from the Board of Lords of Trade and Plantations to his Majesty, or any other, to direct or influence the proceedings of this House, in matters of internal regulation, by any previous proposition or decision on what is referred to, or under their consideration and deliberation, is an interference with the appropriate functions of the House, which it is their bounden duty never to submit to." The persecuting statute, however, being repealed, the missionaries returned to the work; and although they were frequently impeded by local edicts, and the people often cruelly punished for worshipping God, some indications of prosperity were beginning to appear, when a new ordinance, again silencing the preachers, and closing the chapels, was published in June, 1807.

When this was known in England, the Committees renewed their exertions, and, after considerable difficulty and

delay, this enactment shared the fate of its predecessors, and was repealed by the king in council on May 23rd, 1809, at Whitehall. In communicating this fact to the government of Jamaica, his Majesty commanded the legislature there "to make no more laws relating to religion, without first laying a copy of them before himself in Council." Yet, notwithstanding this peremptory mandate, the government of Jamaica still found frequent means for silencing the preachers, and otherwise impeding the operation of the Mission.

The Conference of 1811.

The Conference of 1811 was held in Sheffield, beginning July 29th. Charles Atmore was president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The number of Circuits in Great Britain and Ireland was at this time 315, being an increase of 35. The following changes were made :—Hertfordshire, Sussex, and Bideford Mission ceased to be reckoned as Circuits; and the following became Circuits :—Deptford, Brentford, Barnet, Chelmsford Mission, Ipswich, Ashford Mission, Framlingham, Farnham Mission, Reading, Marlborough Mission, Stratton Mission, Okehampton Mission, Barnstaple, Kingswood, Minehead, Melksham, Stanton, West Bromwich, Coleshill, Coventry, Ledbury Mission, Oswestry, Altringham, Ashton-under-Lyne, Bacup, Prescot, Garstang, Bramley, Pateley Bridge, Cromford, Worksop, Holderness, Guisborough, Thirsk, Wensley Dale, Brampton Mission, Greenock, and Innishowen. The number of members in the Societies in Great Britain and Ireland was 173,758, being an increase on the year of 7,752. The number in British America and the West Indies was 13,382, being a decrease of 198. Collections were allowed to be made within certain prescribed limits for ninety-five needy chapel trusts. Minutes were adopted for the purpose of inducing a more vigilant attention to family religion among the people; for the establish-

Its transactions.

ment of Societies in all the Circuits for the distribution of religious tracts; for enjoining a more faithful attention to discipline on the part of superintendents; and for more zealously watching over the leaders of Classes, with a view to promote their holiness and usefulness.

Dr. Coke was authorized to visit such of the Circuits as he thought proper, for the purpose of soliciting private subscriptions on behalf of the Mission Fund. The Committee of Privileges was re-appointed, and a special vote of thanks passed to the Committee of the preceding year for their well directed, indefatigable, and successful exertions in opposition to Lord Sidmouth's Bill. Another minute presented "the particular and unanimous thanks of the Conference to Thomas Thompson, Esq., M.P., to William Marriott, Sen., Esq., and to Mr. Thomas Allan, for their most important and disinterested services on this momentous occasion."

Other minutes were passed respecting the audit of the general accounts; Kingswood School; for the purchase and settlement of the estate for the new school at Woodhouse Grove; and for raising the requisite sum of money for the last-mentioned object.

Obituary of preachers.

In the obituary of preachers we find, among others, the names of George Baldwin, Pierre du Pontavice, and Parson Greenwood. The first of these was savingly converted to God very early in life, joined the Methodist Society, and became a useful local preacher. He was called to the work of the ministry in 1786, and for twenty-four years discharged the duties of that sacred office with diligence, faithfulness, and zeal. He died full of confidence in God just at the commencement of the Conference of 1810.

Pierre du Pontavice was of illustrious descent, the son of a French nobleman. He had just left college, having

completed his education, when the Revolution broke out in France. In the hope of checking existing evils, he was induced to attach himself to the army under the command of the Duke of Brunswick; and when that general was compelled to retreat before Dumouriez, he left the army, and resided a short time in Holland, and from thence passed over to the island of Jersey. Here he became acquainted with the Methodist preachers; and, though earnestly warned from the practice by other refugees, and especially the priests, he diligently attended their ministry, and thus obtained much religious instruction and profit. In July, 1795, he was ordered with the other emigrants to join the expedition to Quiberon Bay; but the vessel in which he was placed, having been unavoidably delayed, was too late to join the squadron. He thus escaped the destruction which involved almost all who took part in that unfortunate affair, and was taken to London. There he sought Mr. Richard Reece, whom he had known in Jersey, and was by him introduced to Dr. Coke, who at that time wanted the services of a person well versed in the French language. M. Pontavice was glad to accept the engagement, and proceeded to travel with the doctor. While he was thus engaged, his desires for the experience of salvation greatly increased; and at Chester, meeting with Messrs. Bramwell and Taylor, he was, while they were engaged in prayer with him, brought into the liberty of the children of God. Some time after his conversion he felt an inward call to the work of the ministry, and was in 1800 appointed to Guernsey, where he preached in his native language with great acceptance and success. His name appears on that, or the neighbouring Circuit of Jersey, to the end of his life. For some years he was marked as a missionary, and laboured chiefly in

France after 1802, where he was very useful, especially among several Protestant congregations near Bolbec, although he occasionally preached at Havre, Rouen, and other places. He died in great peace at Beauville, December 1st, 1810.

Parson Greenwood laboured as an itinerant minister thirty-one years acceptably and usefully. He became a supernumerary in 1793, and settled in Leeds, where he died in the Lord in the early part of 1811.

Attempts to wrest existing laws for the persecution of Methodism.

The defeat of the attempt to restrict Methodism by coercive laws, by the rejection of Lord Sidmouth's Bill in the preceding year, led the enemies of evangelical religion to attempt the accomplishment of their purposes in the then existing state of the law. They did this in two different ways,—by reviving mob persecution, in the hope of harassing the Methodists with impunity; and by proceeding against them penally, in the expectation of succeeding by an illiberal construction of the Toleration Act. We will give one instance of each of these efforts.

On Sunday, January 13th, 1811, the Methodist congregation were assembled in their licensed place of meeting at Pershore, in the county of Worcester. The preachers and people had frequently, both before and after worship, been grievously ill-treated in this place; but, on this occasion, the shutters and windows were broken, whilst they were assembled for Divine service, and stones were thrown into the place, by which one woman was wounded. Mr. Hunt, a man of property, having been openly engaged in this outrage, it was determined to seek the protection of the law. Proceedings having been commenced, the indictment was removed by *certiorari* from the Quarter Sessions to the Assizes. At the trial, the offence was clearly proved; and the judge closed his summing up by observing, that the parties were not at a private meeting to hear a mere

enthusiast, but to hear a licensed preacher in a licensed meeting-house. He noticed that no evidence had been adduced for the defendants, either in denial or extenuation; and he declared that no devout man could have gone into that place of worship, and remained with his hat on, as the defendant Hunt had done; besides his putting out the candles, as proved, and his indecent and riotous conduct there: and it was impossible to hear the evidence gone through, without being satisfied that the parties had been guilty of a most atrocious riot. The jury then returned a verdict of Guilty; so that this effort to outrage every religious and social right with impunity failed.

The instance we shall cite of an attempt to make a legal aggression on religious liberty, occurred a little earlier. William Kent, a Methodist, in the county of Berks, was convicted before William Henry Price, Esq., in the penalty of £20, for preaching and praying in a meeting or conventicle, held in an uninhabited house, on Sunday evening, the 21st of October, 1810, in other manner than according to the Liturgy of the Church of England, when five persons or more were present. He, by the advice of his brethren, appealed against the conviction; and the cause was tried at the General Quarter Sessions for the county of Berks, held at Reading, January 16th, 1811, before the Earl of Radnor, and four other magistrates of the county. The jury brought in their verdict, "Guilty of teaching or preaching." The counsel for the appellant objected to the verdict; and in Hilary Term an application was made to the Court of King's Bench for a *certiorari,* to remove the proceedings, in order that the same might be quashed, which was granted by the court; and in the Easter Term following the rule was made absolute without opposition. The conviction and judgment of the Court of Quarter

Sessions were accordingly set aside, and the penalty of twenty pounds returned by the convicting magistrate to the defendant.

Vexatious and hazardous nature of these struggles.

These victories, however, were exceedingly expensive, and involved immense trouble and annoyance. Nor were the struggles which obtained them carried on without some apprehension, lest, by some perverse opinion of a judge, or obstinate prejudice of a jury, an unfavourable issue might at some time be received, the consequences of which would be most disastrous.

Besides, the same spirit which dictated these persecuting proceedings was not unfrequently found on the bench; and it was soon ascertained that a vigorous attempt was being made to introduce a new practical construction of the Toleration Act, so as completely, or at least to a very great extent, to answer all the purposes which were contemplated by the Bill of Lord Sidmouth. One prominent part of this new interpretation was to enable the magistrates to require that all applicants for licences, in addition to the usual oaths, should prove they were ministers of certain separate congregations. This novelty fell with special hardship on the Methodists, and from it, in many cases, no redress could be obtained.

These circumstances induced the Methodists and Dissenters to desire very earnestly such an alteration in the law as would not only clearly define, but also extend, their religious liberty. Many, indeed, had very serious doubts as to the chance of success in such an attempt, and consequently feared the result might damage the cause it was intended to benefit. It happened, however, that, attention having been called to the subject by the recent proceedings in Parliament, the archbishops and bishops presented a return to the House of Lords of the numbers of places of

worship in every parish containing 1,000 persons and upwards. According to this return, the

Total of churches and chapels of the Church of England was 2,547
Total of chapels and meeting-houses not of the Church of England 3,457

This information excited conflicting feelings in the different parties concerned. Those who were opposed to Dissent, and dreaded its increase, saw in this great preponderance in the number of Dissenting places of worship serious cause for indignation and alarm, and a most substantial reason for exerting themselves to prevent a further spread of the evil. On the other hand, the exhibition of these figures furnished the Methodists and Dissenters with grounds for demanding the protection of the law, and free liberty of worship, as their numbers were now proved to be too great to be treated by any government with opposition or contempt.

Necessity for an alteration of the law.

In order, however, to give the general reader a correct idea of the great necessity which existed for the alteration of the laws respecting liberty of conscience and worship, it may be necessary to state, that the worst of the persecuting laws made in the time of the Stuarts were still in force. Neither the Conventicle Act of Charles II., nor the notorious Five Mile Act, passed in the same reign, had been repealed. The Act of Toleration had exempted Dissenters from the operation of these statutes; but every one who could not claim exemption as a Dissenter was still liable to their penalties. And exemption on this ground many Methodists could not conscientiously claim. These inconveniences were greatly enhanced by the new con-

struction which had been put on the Toleration Act by many of the magistrates. And although several of these misconstructions had been set aside by the superior courts, others of great importance had been affirmed. The Court of King's Bench had held that a man, to entitle himself to a licence for preaching, was bound to show that he was the acknowledged teacher or preacher of some *particular congregation.* It is certain that, in the sense in which such a phrase would be ordinarily used, no Methodist preacher could do this; and this was known and acted on by magistrates. At the Leeds Sessions, February, 1812, several Methodist preachers were refused licences to preach, because they were not attached to separate congregations. The decision of the same court also left the country in great uncertainty as to the strict legal sense of the terms, "holy orders, or pretended holy orders." These causes combined gave the Methodist community very great uneasiness and apprehension. So wide-spread, indeed, was the alarm, that the Committee of Privileges felt itself called on, in May, 1812, to issue a circular to the Connexion, assuring it "that no time would be lost in taking such measures as were likely to promote the success of an application to the legislature for relief." This circular was accompanied by the copy of a letter from Mr. Perceval, then premier, published with his consent, in which he promised to bring forward, or to support, such an application to Parliament.

The assassination of that minister, on the 11th of May, for a while checked the hopes which had been entertained. The Committee were, however, indefatigable; and with the able and energetic aid of Mr. Thomas Allan, who was, throughout, the inspiring genius of the whole effort, the work was carried on. It had been seen from the

beginning, that the subject was too comprehensive and public in its character, to be dealt with successfully as a private Bill, or by unofficial parties. It was on this account that the loss of Mr. Perceval had been so severely felt. After some time the subject was brought under the attention of the Earl of Liverpool, the new premier. And it is but simple justice to that nobleman to say, that when he was informed that the grounds on which the measure was sought were "the inalienable right of every man to worship God agreeably to the dictates of his own conscience; and that he has a right to *hear* and to *teach* those Christian truths which he conscientiously believes, without any restraint or judicial interference from the civil magistrate, provided he do not thereby disturb the peace of the community;" and when it was urged on him, that a Bill founded on such principles would at once secure the rights of conscience, and give every needful pledge to the state; he consented to meet the wishes of the Committee, fully and without delay. His lordship and his Majesty's ministers accordingly prepared a Bill which met the requirements of the case, and which, having safely passed both Houses of Parliament, received the royal assent on the 29th of July, 1812.

An Act, fully meeting the case, prepared and passed.

It is most pleasing to be able to record the fact, that this act of justice and sound policy was carried, not only without serious opposition, but with the cordial consent and co-operation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Lord Chancellor took charge of the Bill in the House of Peers, and Lord Castlereagh, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in the House of Commons. The friends of civil and religious liberty are under great obligations to Lords Stanhope, Holland, and Erskine, for their assistance to the measure in the Upper House; and to Messrs. William

Wilberforce, James Stephen, Samuel Whitbread, and James Babington in the Commons.

When this Bill was published, it was accompanied with a series of observations on the privileges which it conferred, with some practical directions, from the pen of Mr. Thomas Allan, its indefatigable promoter. From these it is made fully apparent that the Act honestly effected all it professed, afforded every reasonable liberty for worship, and secured to Englishmen, inviolate, the sacred rights of conscience.

Mr. Jabez Bunting appointed superintendent of Halifax.

This year, a minister who has been previously mentioned as sustaining a very eminent position in the Connexion, although still a young man, was brought into rather prominent notice. At the Conference of 1811, Mr. Jabez Bunting was appointed to the superintendency of Halifax. As any attempt to furnish a history of the middle age of Methodism, which does not contain some account of the early progress and rising influence of this extraordinary minister, must be lamentably defective, we proceed to furnish the best sketch which our limited means enable us to supply. When, in 1769, Richard Boardman was journeying from the metropolis to embark on his voyage for his Mission to America, he stayed to sleep a night at the quiet little village of Moneyash, in Derbyshire; and, according to the customs of the time, preached there in the evening. His text was, 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10,—the prayer of Jabez. His word came with saving power to at least one young woman in the congregation, and left such a lasting impression on her mind, that when married and residing in Manchester ten years afterward, the Lord having blessed her with a first, and indeed only, son, she called his name Jabez. And, while yet an infant, she carried him to Oldham Street chapel, and presented him to Wesley, when

His early life, and rise to eminence.

the venerable minister took the child in his arms, and gave him his blessing.

The child grew up an object of intense solicitude to his pious mother, who frequently offered for him the prayer that had come with such holy unction to her own heart, "O that Thou wouldest bless me indeed!" From his childhood she took him to the means of grace, including the lovefeasts; and his habits and manner of life, when a young lad, must have displayed some marks of this religious culture; for his schoolfellows teased him much for being a Methodist, which led his mother to speak to the master about removing him from that school, upon which the master intimated that the mind of the boy was as far above mediocrity as his morals. "Make yourself easy on that head," said he; "for he will soon be at the head of the school, and then all the other boys will be under him." The prediction was soon fulfilled, and his companions were then as ready to honour, as they had before been to plague him. At length, when Jabez was about fifteen, Mr. Alexander Mather, who was superintendent of the Circuit, strictly enforced the rule that no person should be admitted to a lovefeast without a ticket, the usual token of membership. Mrs. Bunting, about this time, was preparing to go to a lovefeast, and, as usual, Jabez prepared to accompany her; but his mother told him, for the reason just mentioned, that he could not; and then, with much solemnity, said, "I do not know what you think of it, Jabez; but to me it seems an awful thing, that, after having been carried there, you should now be excluded by your own fault." These words sank into his heart. To use his own expression, "The blow was struck in the right place." He was soon afterward a regular member of Society, meeting in the Class of his maternal uncle. Under his instruction Mr.

Bunting was savingly converted to God. Years passed on. He approached manhood; and his future course of life was soon to be defined. In this respect, Providence appeared to have greatly favoured him. His father, a pious and sensible man, had placed him at the proper age in one of the best schools in the town: there he became very friendly with the son of Dr. Percival, then very eminent as a physician and literary man in Manchester. Young Percival frequently took his youthful friend home; and, through these visits, the doctor became so much attached to Jabez Bunting, that he received him into his family without a fee as his medical pupil and amanuensis. Thus situated, Mr. Bunting, when in his twentieth year, formed an acquaintance with the late James Wood, Esq., of Grove House, Manchester, then a young man, but some years Mr. Bunting's senior, and a Methodist local preacher. At this time Mr. Bunting also had thoughts of preaching. Indeed, the hand of God was evidently upon him; and by such means as the Head of the church employs on those occasions, all this was made apparent, and issued in an arrangement for Mr. Bunting to preach in a cottage, or farm-house, in the presence of his friend. Mr. Wood was perfectly amazed at the result. The text selected on this occasion was, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." And in the surprise and delight of the occasion, Mr. Wood thought that he had never heard a better sermon: indeed, although he was a strong-minded, polished, and intelligent man, and one of the most eloquent local preachers of his day, he has frequently declared that he doubted whether Mr. Bunting ever preached a better sermon than his second. Whatever friendly exaggeration there may be in this opinion, it cannot be doubted that Mr. Bunting started on his course of

preaching, like William Pitt in senatorial oratory, at an elevation which precluded the reasonable hope of any future marked improvement.

Such a man would of course be thought of as eligible to full employment in the work of the ministry; and overtures tending to this issue were suggested by his friend. But a compliance with these, on his part, involved a very serious temporal sacrifice. Dr. Percival had formed so high an opinion of him, that he had made arrangements by which Mr. Bunting should take his diploma at a continental university, free of expense; and had further promised to introduce him to a Manchester practice, worth, even at first, £700 a year. Add to this, that his mother was now a widow, and he her only son. Yet, in these circumstances, both had grace to accede cheerfully to the Divine will. The pious mother had long since devoted her son to God, and had now no wish to recall the gift. The son, well knowing the emoluments and social position of a Methodist preacher, renounced all the flattering prospects which had been spread before his vision, and gave himself to the work of the ministry in the will of God. He was received on trial, and appointed to the Oldham Circuit at the Conference of 1799, when about twenty years and two months old.*

From the time of his admission, his rise to the highest point of influence was steady, rapid, and complete. Nor was this unexampled progress occasioned by the absence of real intellect and worth in the Methodist ministry of the day. At that time the Conference contained Henry

* In preparing the above, we have been much indebted to a characteristic sketch of this eminent minister, which was published anonymously; but which, we happen to know, emanated from the pen of the Rev. William Arthur, A.M.

Moore, Joseph Benson, Samuel Bradburn, Adam Clarke, and others, who, if not of equal calibre, were far above mediocrity. Yet, in the presence of all these, his seniors, Mr. Bunting won his way to the summit of honour, influence, and respect. It is utterly vain to discuss, as some have done, the precise means by which this result was brought about, as if it had been effected by some trick, bargain, or manœuvre. On a free and common platform, like that which Methodism presents, no man barters away his influence, power, or respect; no man can buy or steal any one of these. The only way to their attainment is by the judicious, consistent, and useful employment of the powers which God has given. This is the secret of Mr. Bunting's rise to the position which he so long, and so honourably, occupied.

The chapel at Halifax enlarged.

From the time that Mr. Bunting entered on the superintendency of Halifax, he was engaged in important affairs, besides his usual course of duty. The first object of concern was a considerable enlargement of the chapel, which was determined on at the September Quarterly Meeting, and forthwith carried into effect. The chapel, in its enlarged and altered form, was capable of containing two thousand persons. It was re-opened by the Rev. Messrs. James Wood, Jabez Bunting, and Richard Watson.

Trouble with the Luddite rioters there.

A still more serious difficulty arose at this time in the fearful prevalence of a daring spirit of riot and insubordination, occasioned by a general impression among the operatives in the manufactories, that they were greatly injured in their business by the extensive introduction of machinery. Under the influence of this delusion, a system of organization and military training was adopted, and secret oaths were administered. Armed bodies of men went about disguised in the night, destroying not only

machinery, but other property of individuals. Near Huddersfield a principal manufacturer was shot in broad day, in the public highway, by a force of infatuated men. They were called "Luddites," from the supposed leader, Captain Ludd; which was, however, a fictitious name.

It could not be supposed that a mania like this could pervade a country, without its being exposed and condemned by Methodist preachers. Mr. Bunting did this with all the weight of his eloquence and authority at Halifax, and, as a necessary result, secured the hatred of the whole horde of Luddites. A circumstance which occurred in the spring of 1812 gave peculiar intensity to this hatred. One of the Luddites was shot whilst attempting to break into a mill near Cleckheaton. His death was regarded by his confederates as an honourable martyrdom, and they determined to make the occasion of the funeral an opportunity of displaying their numbers and their strong feelings. They selected the Methodist burial-ground as the place, and hoped to have Mr. Bunting to perform the service. He, however, had penetrated their designs, and refused; and the corpse was buried by the junior preacher. The chapel ground was crowded with a dense throng, who manifested such signs of unmistakeable displeasure, that the preacher had to make a very abrupt exit, as soon as he had closed the service. From that time, all who sympathized with the Luddite party showed the most determined hostility to Mr. Bunting. They carried this, indeed, to such a height, that they issued a positive threat that his life should be taken. The object of their ill-will was, however, in no degree intimidated by this menace: in one of his discourses in the town, he alluded to the circumstance, and expressed his unshaken confidence in the watchful care of Providence, and his determination

to do his duty. His friends, however, were so impressed with the ferocious character of the faction, that they did not for some time allow him to go to his country appointments alone.

Mr. Daniel Isaac similarly harassed at Shields.

A combination, very analogous to that of the Luddites in spirit and object, was formed among the colliers in the Newcastle coal-mining district, under the title of *the Brotherhood*. Mr. Daniel Isaac, who was then at Shields, saw the danger which threatened social order from this movement, and feared that some ill-informed or weak members of Society would be drawn aside by this delusion. He accordingly interested himself to counteract the mischief, took the best legal advice on the subject, wrote to the preachers of the Newcastle Circuit, and secured their co-operation: they then visited all the collieries where Methodist Societies existed, and instructed the members and hearers respecting the evil of the Brotherhood, both in a civil and a religious point of view; and exhorted those who had taken the oath to abjure it, and all others to keep clear of it. Many immediately renounced all connexion with this illegal faction; and, as soon as some had taken this step from a principle of conscience, many others did so lest they should be informed against; so a death-blow was struck at the whole delusion, and it speedily passed away. Mr. Isaac's efforts, however, so enraged some of the most violent of them, that they set on him with bludgeons, as he was returning from preaching at night, so that he narrowly escaped from serious personal injury.

Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone appears on the Minutes of this year, with George Warren as preacher. The name also appeared in the list of Circuits of 1808, with this observation, "A preacher is to be appointed as soon as the general superintendent and the Committee can find a suitable person."

Sierra Leone is also found in the list which gives the names of the Circuits, with the numbers in each, for the year 1792, as having "223 coloured people:" the same entry, without any variation in the number, is repeated successively in the four following years, after which it is omitted. These singular circumstances require some explanation, and such explanation will supply an account of the origin of that interesting colony. The geographical situation of this place, on the West Coast of Africa, is now too well known to require any observation; we may therefore proceed at once to state the origin of the settlement in that locality. When England was engaged in the war with the States of America, in which they achieved their independence, great numbers of Negroes left their masters and joined the British army. At the close of the war, it became a serious question what was to be done with these men. To leave them in the country was to hand back those who had faithfully adhered to our cause, nobly willing to shed their blood in our service, to hopeless slavery, and to the fury of the masters from whom they had escaped, and against whom they had fought. This, therefore, was out of the question. An asylum was accordingly offered them in Canada, and thither the great body of them repaired, although many came with their several corps to England. The latter, when the troops were disbanded,—as many of the regiments were soon afterward,—were in a short time found lying about the streets in wretchedness and starvation.

The origin of the colony.

Moved by their sad case, some benevolent gentlemen, knowing that the country about Sierra Leone was thinly populated, and that the climate was congenial to the Negro constitution, brought the case under the notice of the government, and requested that these poor men might be

sent to the Western Coast of Africa, where they would be able to secure a living. After some consideration the request was complied with. The result was, that territory of about twenty square miles at Sierra Leone was purchased of the native chiefs; and about four hundred of these Negroes, with about sixty women of abandoned character who had engaged to accompany them, were taken at the public expense, and located on the territory so procured. Few persons will now regard the remedy as more hopeful than the evil it was intended to remove. That four hundred disbanded Negro soldiers, and a number of London prostitutes, should—without teachers, government, or religion—be expected to settle down as orderly and industrious colonists, notwithstanding the mildness of the climate and the fertility of the soil, seems a most extravagant hope. As might have been expected, after a while, the whole company had either died or dispersed, and the ground was again unoccupied. This occurred about 1788 or 1789. And, as the question of the Slave Trade had at this time attracted considerable attention, it occurred to the leaders in that movement, that this purchased territory offered a very favourable opportunity for forming a free colony on an important part of the African coast. The object was announced to be carried into effect by an English company, and, an application having been regularly made, the requisite sum was soon subscribed. Wilberforce, Thornton, Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and others, then applied to Parliament, and obtained the requisite legal powers; the company was accordingly incorporated, and its operations began. As this was not merely an attempt to establish a factory for trade, according to the manner of the times, but an effort to form an important centre of civilization for the purpose of checking the inhuman slave traffic, great

care was taken in selecting the settlers. Artisans of various trades, of sober habits and good character, with a few soldiers, formed the basis of the colony. They reached their destination in safety; a town was laid out, and they began to build; a government was inaugurated; worship was established according to the forms of the National Church, with perfect freedom for those who wished to adopt another mode to follow the dictates of their conscience; and everything went on hopefully. More inhabitants being found desirable, the Negroes who had been left in Canada were thought of; and as the climate of that country was very unsuitable for the Negro race, 1,131 of the Negroes, who were willing to leave the cold country of Canada, were in 1792 transferred to this new settlement. Among these were many members of the Methodist Society, including two or three local preachers and leaders, who, on arriving at Sierra Leone, proceeded to perpetuate the religious privileges to which they had been accustomed. It was information received in England of the arrival of these persons, which led to the entry in the Minutes of 223 members in Society at this place in 1792 and the following years. It was the wish to provide this little band of pious people with a regular ministry, and to spread religion in the colony, which caused the intimation that a missionary would be sent to be inserted in the Minutes of 1808; a promise which was this year carried into effect.

And of the Mission to it.

When Dr. Coke was travelling in Cornwall, in the winter of 1810, soliciting subscriptions in support of the Missions, he was delighted to find that Mr. George Warren, the preacher then labouring at Helston, had thought much of the want of a missionary at Sierra Leone. Stimulated, rather than deterred, by the circumstances and climate of the colony, he offered himself for

that arduous duty; declaring that, "for a long season, his mind had been deeply impressed with a persuasion that it was his duty to visit Africa; that even now he would prefer this station to any other; and that he was fully confident these impressions came from God." Immediately after Mr. Warren had made this declaration, Dr. Coke received a letter from the superintendent of Dewsbury, informing him of three pious young men of his acquaintance, who had volunteered to go to the same colony, as teachers, schoolmasters, or in any other capacity in which they could be useful. These facts were laid before the Missionary Committee, who directed the young Yorkshiremen to be examined at the District Meeting. These important preparations having been satisfactorily made, Mr. Warren, with his three young companions, well equipped in every respect, and provided with a plentiful supply of Bibles, embarked at Liverpool on the 21st of September, 1811, and pursued their way to their appointed destination.

The Conference of 1812.

The Conference of 1812 began in Leeds on the 27th of July. Mr. Joseph Entwisle was elected president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The Circuits now numbered 324, being an increase of 9. The usual review of the state of the Connexion led to the following changes:—Chelmsford Mission, Bletchingly Mission, Framlingham, Littleport, Marlborough Mission, Torquay, South Devon Mission, Kingswood, Minehead, Cirencester Mission, Caerphilly, Neath, Lampeter, Denbigh, Ledbury Mission, Altringham, Worksop Mission, Holderness, and Gainsborough, ceased to be numbered as Circuits; while Huntingdon, Leighton Buzzard, Lowestoff, New Buckenham, Ely, Brixham, Kingsbridge, Scilly Isles, Dunster, Frome, Winchcombe, Cardiff, St. David's, Swansea,

Holywell, Llangollen, Warrington, Wigan, Sowerby Bridge, Selby, Bradwell, Uttoxeter, Boston, Patrington, Pickering, Durham, Gateshead, and Aughrim, were now made to rank as Circuits. It must not be supposed from the number of places thus dropping out of the list of Circuits annually, that the Methodist cause had failed in those neighbourhoods; the change frequently arose from the fact that the place first named was not found just then to be so favourable a centre of Methodist operations, as some other place in the neighbourhood. For this reason Torquay was dropped this year, and Brixham appears in its stead. Nor must it be thought, because so many Mission Stations disappear from the list, that the efforts in these places have proved abortive; on the contrary, this is usually a proof of success. The South Devon Mission, as an instance, ceases this year; but then its fruits appear in the erection of the Kingsbridge Circuit, which is now for the first time found in the list.

The number of members in the Societies throughout Great Britain and Ireland was at this time 182,947, being an increase of 9,189 on the year. In British America and the West Indies the numbers were 14,267, an increase of 985 on the year.

Its transactions.

The thanks of the Conference were given to the late Committee; "but most particularly to Mr. Butterworth and Mr. Allan, for their indefatigable, successful, and gratuitous labours to obtain that invaluable law which has lately received the royal assent, and by which our religious liberties are confirmed and secured." Several minutes were made for regulating the interpretation of our rules in respect of those preachers who are called out into the ministry in the course of the year; for prescribing the manner of the administration of baptism; for reviving and extending

band-meetings; for regulating the annual examination of the preachers at the District Meetings; for relieving the financial affairs of the Connexion from embarrassment; for paying off the debt of the Missionary Society; for appointing a general superintendent to go to the West Indies, to direct those Missions, and for holding District Meetings there; and several others respecting the affairs of Woodhouse Grove.

Mr. Richard Watson again received into the Methodist ministry.

Among the names of the preachers received on trial at this Conference we find that of James Dixon; and among those received into full Connexion we have Richard Watson. The return of this eminent minister to the communion of his early friends must be explained. Our last reference to Mr. Watson was when, in May, 1811, he wrote a letter to a Manchester newspaper in opposition to Lord Sidmouth's Bill. At the ensuing New Connexion Conference, held in June the same year, Mr. Watson was again elected secretary; but the Annual Address of that body to the Societies was not, as in former years, written by him. He was again appointed to Manchester; but he had not spent many months of the year in his work, before his health again failed; the bleeding of his lungs returned with worse symptoms than before: he was thus rendered utterly unable to perform the duties of his office, and there seemed very little probability that he would ever again be so far restored as to be able permanently to endure the labours of the itinerant ministry; and as he had long been dissatisfied with the discipline of the Methodist New Connexion, and was therefore, in some degree, unhappy in his union with that body, he tendered his resignation to the authorities in the Circuit, and retired to Liverpool; where, after the lapse of a few months, he offered himself as a private member of Society in the Wes-

leyan Connexion. In taking this step, Mr. Watson acted in accordance with the advice of some of his most intelligent and confidential friends belonging to the New Connexion, who thought that, with his views, he was likely to be both more happy and more useful among his old associates, from whom he had formerly departed under the pressure of unkind treatment and of strong temptation.

There can be no doubt that Mr. Watson was under great obligations to the preachers and people of the New Connexion. They had received him when he was comparatively unknown, without friends or influence; and had treated him with uniform affection, respect, and great consideration. They had honoured him beyond his years, and had placed him in those Circuits best adapted to the state of his health. Nor did he leave them until he was unable to discharge his duties as a minister: and when he did this, he gave the best proof of his high principle and sincerity of mind. In his shattered state of health, with a wife and two children, there was the least possible probability that he would be received as a Wesleyan minister, even if his strength should return so as to enable him to bear the labour. The fact unquestionably is, that when Mr. Watson entered the New Connexion, he felt no objection to its discipline or economy; but that, as he became acquainted with its operation, his judgment disapproved, and he was severely tried to have to administer it; and hence, when received as a private member into the old body, he said, with deep feeling, that for the first time during the last eleven years his mind was fully at rest. But then, as Mr. Jackson has well observed, it was with the system, and not with the people of the New Connexion, that he was dissatisfied. With many of them he cherished a sincere and ardent Christian friendship for many years.

On settling in Liverpool, as soon as he was able to attend to anything requiring mental or physical exertion, he engaged himself at an annual salary to his friend Mr. Kaye, as the editor of the "Liverpool Courier," and for other literary services. Mr. Kaye highly valued Mr. Watson's abilities, and counted largely on the proceeds which would be derived from the productions of his pen. But, able as Mr. Watson was as a literary man, preaching was the great work in which his soul delighted. When, therefore, his health was so far restored as to enable him to take an occasional service, he consented to act as a local preacher; and on the 2nd of March, at the Quarterly Local Preachers' Meeting of the Circuit, Mr. Entwisle proposed his reception as a local preacher. As considerable prejudice existed in the minds of some present, this proposal occasioned an animated discussion, which issued, however, in the reception of Mr. Watson as a local preacher. By Mr. Entwisle's kind attention, Mr. Watson occasionally occupied the pulpits for the ministers on the Circuit; and, as his health continued to improve, the preachers urged him to give himself again to the work of the ministry. Mr. Bunting, who had some previous acquaintance with him, at this time visited Liverpool, and joined in the solicitation of Mr. Entwisle and the other preachers on the spot. "Mr. Watson at length consented, and was recommended to the District Meeting, and afterwards to the Conference, by whom he was very cordially received. The practical errors of his youth were buried in oblivion; the men who had formerly taken part against him, and had unhappily been the means of separating him from the Connexion, uttered not a word against his readmission; for his character, both as a man of God, and a good minister of Jesus Christ, was established; and,

without subjecting him to any further probation, he was placed precisely in the circumstances in which he stood, when, eleven years before, he left his work in the Hinckley Circuit." *

Yet how strange are the exercises of mind to which men of God are subjected in taking their way through this world! When Richard Watson resigned his position in the New Connexion, and threw himself with broken health on the precarious produce of his pen, he evidently made a great sacrifice. After a very few months had elapsed, he now made another sacrifice, in a pecuniary point of view, to become a Methodist minister. Mr. Kaye so highly valued his services, that, in regard to what Mr. Watson might expect from him, he was far from consulting his secular advantage in leaving him for the emoluments of a Methodist minister. But this was not all. His worth, and the power of his pen, were well known and appreciated in other quarters. "Overtures of a very flattering nature were made to him at this crisis by persons in authority, if he would remove to London, and employ his pen in the public service." † Not the least amongst the marvels of Methodism is the amount of sacrifice of this sort made by its ministers. How many times have we seen two young men, about equal in talent and social position, called to preach, and occupying nearly an equal position as local preachers! One of these has, under the influence of the Holy Spirit and the call of the church, given himself to the work of the ministry. The other has engaged in business, or devoted his life to the pursuit of some other honourable profession. The result has been, that the latter has earned a position amongst the wealthy, which has placed before his children free access to a status

* JACKSON'S "Life of Watson," p. 116. † *Ibid.*, p. 118.

among the aristocracy of the next generation; whilst the minister has been found at the close of a long and laborious career as he was at the beginning,—with bread for himself and his children, and nothing more. Yet this is not difficult to be accounted for. Is it asked, "Is there unrighteousness with the great Master?" The answer will be, "Surely, their 'judgment is with the Lord, and their reward with their God.'" There is nothing in those results to deter men of the greatest and most accomplished minds, who are called by the Holy Spirit to the work of the ministry, from following the example of Jabez Bunting, Richard Watson, and other noble-minded and gifted men, who have sacrificed the gains of earth to lay up treasure in heaven.

And appointed to Wakefield.

On returning to the Wesleyan ministry, Mr. Watson was appointed to the Wakefield Circuit, under the superintendency of his friend Mr. Buckley, who had moved his acceptance in the Conference. As promptly as possible he removed to that town, and entered upon his course of ministerial labour. His mind was now perfectly at ease; he was engaged in the work which, without any qualification, both his judgment and his conscience approved; and he performed it not only with great ability, but with such fidelity and affection as won the esteem and love of the people.

Voyage of the missionaries to Sierra Leone.

The missionaries who had last year left England for Sierra Leone, arrived safely at their destination. It may be observed as a singular incident, that they sailed to that colony in a vessel manned entirely by men of colour, and commanded by Captain Paul Cuffee, who was of the same race and complexion as his crew. He was a pious Quaker, and "we have," says Dr. Coke, "reason to believe there was not a seaman on board who did not fear God." In

the course of their voyage they were pursued for two days by a schooner which the captain had no doubt was a French privateer, and which at three o'clock in the afternoon of the second day had gained so much upon them that their capture appeared to be inevitable. In deep concern the missionaries, accompanied by the captain, retired to the cabin, and engaged in earnest prayer to Almighty God. It was not long after they had thus solemnly commended themselves to the Divine protection, that a breeze sprung up, which soon increased to a gale, and which enabled them to distance their pursuer more rapidly than he had gained on them, so that in a few hours they had lost sight of their enemy and their fears.

Their reception, labour, and success.

On their arrival at Sierra Leone they were met by the Rev. Mr. Nylander, the chaplain of the colony, to whom they were introduced by Captain Cuffee, to whom he was well known. The chaplain received them with every mark of politeness, kindness, and respect. They were then conducted to the house of a Mr. Nichols, a respectable merchant, where they were hospitably entertained. They had been at this place but a short time, when they were visited by a Mr. Gordon, the principal Methodist local preacher, and who had indeed acted as the superintendent of the Society. When he learned the profession of Mr. Warren, and the object for which he and his companions had come to Sierra Leone, he was astonished beyond measure; but at length recovering a little, "he exclaimed with a rapturous pathos which no art can imitate, 'This is what we have been praying for so long, and now the Lord has answered our prayers!'"

But, delighted as this good man was, his conduct showed that he was not only a pious, but a sensible and discreet man; and that he and those with whom he was united

in church fellowship were equally able to guard against any deception, and to avail themselves of every offered benefit to the utmost. Mr. Gordon, on leaving the missionary, went to another local preacher, a Mr. Brown, and after some consultation they called together the heads of the Society, when the arrival of the strangers was announced, and it was resolved in the first instance to ascertain whether they were properly accredited by Dr. Coke or the Methodist Conference; and, if so, it was agreed that means should be taken to have them formally introduced to the Society. Messrs. Gordon and Brown accordingly waited on Mr. Warren, and desired a private interview. This being granted, they inquired whether he had any letter from the Methodist authorities in England respecting his appointment, upon which Mr. Warren gave them a letter which Dr. Coke had written for the express purpose, before they left him. On reading this letter, the brethren were greatly delighted, and it was agreed to convene the Society on the ensuing evening. At that meeting, which was opened with singing and prayer, one of the leaders read Dr. Coke's letter accrediting Mr. Warren as a Methodist missionary to Sierra Leone. Mr. Brown then rose, and in a very feeling manner expressed the happiness which he felt at receiving a person who was appointed to take charge of their little Society, adding, that of late he had felt the firmest confidence that God was about to provide for them in some such manner. A Mr. Wilkinson declared that he had felt a similar persuasion in the strongest manner for some time, and had many times expressed his conviction to his friends. Mr. Gordon, who had for several years acted as superintendent, stated that the direction of the Society had long been a great burden on his mind, and that he was highly gratified to find that a person had arrived from Europe

to relieve him from a weight which he had long been compelled to bear. In this general satisfaction the Society acquiesced, and the meeting concluded with smiles of congratulation, and devout thanksgiving to God. On the following day, the missionaries waited on Governor Maxwell, who received them courteously, and told them that, although it was his duty to respect in a particular manner the Established Church, he was not opposed to other sects, and sincerely respected all good men. He expressed his satisfaction to receive them as missionaries and persons desirous of promoting education in the colony, and gave them full and free permission to prosecute their labours.

Every difficulty having been thus removed, on the 15th of November, 1811, Mr. Warren opened his missionary commission by preaching in the chapel to a crowded congregation. It was a deeply solemn and affecting season. The people were delighted with the truths they heard, and the pious Negroes rejoiced exceedingly. On the next day Mr. Warren met the stewards and leaders of the whole Society, and was much pleased to find that, although many usages had been introduced which were unknown to Methodism in England, they were all directed to encourage and maintain vital religion, and that great attention had been given to discipline. In these discussions, some persons inquired whether Mr. Warren was legally qualified to administer the sacraments; and on being informed that he was, they were very glad, and an early day was fixed for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Mr. Warren, however, considering the importance of avoiding all occasion of offence, and of maintaining to the utmost a religious union among the inhabitants, made such arrangements that the Methodist worship should not interfere with the times of service in the

Church, nor prevent any from receiving the Lord's Supper there. The chaplain had conducted himself with the most enlightened liberality; and the Methodists responded by an equally cautious and conciliatory conduct.

The ministry of the missionaries was soon attended with the Divine blessing; the congregations increased; frequent applications for admission into the Society were received. All things wore a smiling aspect, and betokened success. Indeed, the missionaries on their arrival found 110 members in Society, although in England, before they left, these were estimated to be about 50. These were soon increased by many who were awakened and converted to God under Mr. Warren's ministry. But this course of prosperity was soon interrupted. Mr. Warren, rendered too confident by continual health, laboured even more than would have been prudent in his native country, and fell a sacrifice to his zeal. His death was sudden, but his uniform and deep piety gave all who knew him an assurance that he had passed away to be for ever with the Lord. Nearly two years elapsed before his place was filled by the appointment of another missionary to that interesting colony.

Attention called to the importance of Missions to India.

Much as Dr. Coke was engaged, and extensive as the existing Methodist Missions were, and almost entirely intrusted to his direction, nothing could divert his mind from the contemplation of further and more extensive aggressions on heathen darkness and impurity. As early as 1806, the Doctor, when travelling in Cornwall, obtained from Colonel Sandys, a pious gentleman who had served twenty years in India, much important information respecting the religious condition of that country, and the prospects of success in the operation of Christian Missions there. Dr. Coke informed the Missionary Committee of this; and, at their request, Colonel Sandys sent them a

written statement of what he had verbally communicated to Dr. Coke on the subject.

The debates which took place in Parliament about this time on the subject of the renewal of the Company's charter, directed special attention to this subject; and the more so, as a resolution which merely tolerated the introduction into that country "of useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvement," subject "to the authority of the local government," was violently opposed in the House of Commons. The death of the pious and devoted Rev. Henry Martyn took place in Persia, October 16th, 1812, after a brilliant career of missionary labour and usefulness, which contributed to impress the British public with the practicability of reaching the Asiatic mind by judicious and earnest Christian instruction. Indeed, too much importance can scarcely be attached to the zeal and success of Martyn, considering under whose auspices they were prosecuted, and the time when they occurred. But, with the highest esteem and veneration for this great and good man, we feel bound to say that it is not just to place him, who went out as a chaplain under the East India Company, in comparison with ordinary missionaries to the East. Martyn during the period of his missionary labours was in the receipt of £1,200 *per annum*,—a salary very different from that received by those who followed him as bearers of the Gospel to the East, as, independently of other considerations, it enabled him to do more in one year than other missionaries might be able to effect in several. Others, indeed, had scarcely a reasonable assurance that their actual necessities would be met. This fact is not mentioned as though it involved any fault in this eminent man, (although, as an eloquent writer on the subject observes, it may have been a misfortune,) but in justice to

the relation which he holds to others engaged in the same work.

The travels and stirring publications of the Rev. Claudius Buchanan also did much to turn the attention of the Christians of India to the moral and spiritual misery and degradation of British subjects in that country. His vivid portraiture of the abominations of Juggernaut first gave a public and popular exhibition of these foul and bloody superstitions. Dr. Coke, anxious to avail himself of every means of information on the subject, put himself in communication with Dr. Buchanan, who, it may be observed, was the friend, correspondent, and relation of Colonel Sandys. From him Dr. Coke received further information, and a confirmation of that which he had previously obtained from the colonel. It is a beautiful subject for contemplation to see this venerable minister, at the age of sixty-six, planning the evangelization of India. We turn away with loathing from contemplating the arts of statesmen and the feats of warriors, to see an old man, who had succeeded in planting and directing successful Missions in America, the West Indies, Gibraltar, Sierra Leone, Ireland, Wales, and in the neglected districts of England, casting his eye across the mighty deep, and bending his whole soul to the glorious work of preaching Christ crucified to the heathens of India.

Dr. Coke zealously prosecutes inquiries on the subject.

During this year a cruel act of intolerance, directed against a Methodist local preacher, was severely punished by the authority of law. On Sunday, the 14th of June, 1812, a few weeks before the Act for extending the Liberty of Worship received the royal assent, William Wood, a carpenter and local preacher, was preaching in the open air in the town of Audlem, in the County Palatine of Chester, when he was violently assaulted by an attorney

A cruel act of intolerance punished.

named Groom, who seized him, whilst kneeling in prayer, and dragged him on the ground a considerable distance. It was afterward alleged that Groom was sworn a special constable for the occasion, and held a warrant from Sir Corbet Corbet, a magistrate, against Wood. But this was not stated before the preacher was seized and dragged away. Two days afterward, Wood was served with a warrant from the same magistrate for preaching in a place not certified and registered according to law. Wood appeared in obedience to the summons, when, on the oaths of the constable and Groom, he was fined £20, and his goods levied on and sold to pay the amount, whereby the poor man was reduced to a state bordering on beggary.

By the advice and assistance of his friends, Wood commenced an action against Groom for an assault. The case was tried at Chester, April 27th, 1813. At the trial it was proved that the proceedings against Wood were taken at the instigation of the Rev. Mr. Breakspeare, the rector of the parish. After a lengthened investigation, the jury found a verdict for the plaintiff, damages £200. On the following 5th of May, a motion was made by counsel in the Court of King's Bench, for a rule to set aside the verdict, and enter a nonsuit. The grounds assigned for the motion were, that Groom being a special constable, and holding a warrant against Wood, the verdict was contrary to law; and if it were not so, that the damages were excessive. The Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough, however, decided otherwise. He held that the verdict was according to law, and that the amount of damages was reasonable; the rule was, therefore, refused, and the verdict affirmed. These proceedings taught parties who desired to indulge themselves in violently abridging the religious liberties of

their neighbours, that the gratification of their desires was likely to prove very troublesome and expensive.

Gracious revival at Bath. Conversion of Mr. Charles Penny.

The work of grace in the salvation of men through the ministry of the Methodist preachers was still carried on. During this year the labours of Mr. Henry Moore and his colleagues at Bath were specially owned of God. An extensive revival took place there, and many were savingly converted to God. Among these was Mr. Charles Penny, who afterwards became a Methodist preacher. "The witness of the Holy Ghost which he then received, enabling him to cry, 'Abba, Father,' he retained through life; and the frequent reference to it in his copious journal shows that his apprehension of this blessing was not vague, but scriptural, accurate, and well-defined. He writes, 'I can realize God by an act of living faith, and am assured that He is mine, and I am His. I find this in the absence of that great joy which I sometimes feel. I have not only experienced this in time past, but enjoy it now. How do I know this? By mere inference? No! The Spirit of God beareth witness with my spirit that I am a child of God, of which I can no more doubt than I can doubt of my existence.'" *

* "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1838, p. 401.

CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE CONFERENCE OF 1813 TO THAT OF 1816.

The Conference of 1813—Its Transactions—Dr. Coke's Application for leave to initiate a Mission to India—The Intensity of his Desire to effect this Object—His Resource when the Conference objected—And ultimate Success—Preparations for the Mission—Necessity of increased Support for Methodist Missions—Means adopted to provide for the Emergency—Formation of a Missionary Society for the Leeds District—The public Meeting—Clear Exposition of the Case by Mr. Bunting—Happy Results of this Movement—The great Revival in Cornwall—Its remarkable Progress—Its sterling Character and blessed Results—It is opposed, but successfully defended—The undoubted moral and religious Effects of this Revival—The Conference of 1814—Important Changes introduced—Election of Mr. Bunting into the "Hundred," and to be Secretary—The Transactions of the Conference—The Voyage of the Missionaries to India—Religious Devotedness of Dr. Coke—His Death—Embarrassment of the Missionaries—They are relieved by the Kindness of Mr. Money—Effect produced by this Intelligence in England—Mr. Bunting's Devotion to the Cause of Missions—Its Importance—Death of Lady Mary Fitzgerald—And of Mr. Michael Longridge—Conversion of John Riddle—Methodist Soldiers at Waterloo—Richard Watson at Hull—The Conference of 1815—Its Transactions—Formation of a mixed Missionary Committee—July Collection instituted—Death of Benjamin Rhodes and Richard Rodda—Death of Mrs. Fletcher—Conversion of Mr. Beecham—Progress of the Missionaries in the East—Their favourable Reception in Ceylon—First Sabbath Services—Conversion and affecting Account of Lord Molesworth—Conversion of Mr. Lahnon—Arrangements for the Establishment of the Mission—It is favoured by the Colonial Authorities—Prosperity of the Missions in the West Indies and America—Jamaica—Antigua—St. Kitt's, Tortola, St. Vincent's, Nevis, and other Islands—British America—Methodism in the United States—Continued Prosperity of Methodism in America—Secession of coloured People from the United States Methodists—Progress of Methodism during twenty-five Years.

The Conference of 1813.

THE Conference of 1813 was held at Liverpool, and began July 28th. Mr. Walter Griffith was elected president, and Dr. Coke secretary. The number of Circuits was now 336, being an increase of 12. The following changes were made:—Farnham Mission, Barnet, Winchcomb, Stanton, St. David's, Neston Mission, Wensleydale, and Innishowen were no longer numbered as Circuits; while the following were placed in the list:—North Walsham, Bury St. Edmund's, Swaffham, Chipping Norton, Plymouth, Cheltenham, Axminster, Midsomer Norton, Lampeter, Buxton, Salford, Woodhouse Grove, Denby, Market Raisen, Alford, Spalding, Guisborough, Tanfield, Dunbar, and Strabane. The number of members in Society at this Conference was 191,264, being an increase of 8,317. In British America and the West Indies there were now 16,742 members, being an increase on the year of 2,475.

Its transactions.

As the importance of the Committee of Privileges had been so fully shown, it had been gradually enlarged, until at the present Conference it included the president, the secretary, all the preachers of the two London, the Brentford, and Deptford Circuits, with about twenty of the most influential gentlemen connected with Methodism in all parts of the country, from Durham and Liverpool to Penzance. The continued and rapid extension of Methodism by the addition of members, the necessarily increased number of preachers, and the multiplication of chapels, continued to embarrass the operations of the Conference by financial difficulties. At this time the deficiency on the year, including the balance of debt brought forward from the last year, was above five thousand pounds.

In order to remedy this state of things, several measures were devised. A circular letter was sent to the

trustees throughout the Connexion, requesting contributions from those chapel trusts which were in circumstances to afford them, toward the general deficiency. A public collection was ordered to be made in all the chapels toward the same object. On this account, no collections in aid of chapels were allowed this year, except in the Circuit in which the chapel was situated. A circular was also sent to the stewards of the Societies and Circuits, urging on them the necessity of making exertions to induce their Societies at least to comply with the rule, and raise on "the average one penny per week, to be paid in the Classes, and one shilling a quarter, to be paid when the tickets are renewed, for each member;" and also to adopt such other measures, with respect to the number of married and single preachers, that each Circuit might bear its full share of the general burden. A part of the plan then devised for bringing the expenditure of the Connexion within the compass of its resources, was the rule which is now so familiar to Methodists as an established law; namely, that "no additional single preacher shall in future be sent to any Circuit, unless such Circuit engage to support an additional married preacher at the end of four years at the latest." Other minutes, relating to finance, to the erection of chapels, suggesting inquiry as to whether there are not more preachers in some Circuits than are absolutely necessary, and giving direction to the Stationing and the District Committees, were adopted; together with a number of general and miscellaneous orders and regulations.

Dr. Coke's application for leave to initiate a Mission to India.

The grand business of this Conference, however, was its decision respecting the proposition made by Dr. Coke, that he, with a suitable number of other ministers, should go to the East, for the purpose of making an attempt to intro-

duce the Gospel of Christ among the natives of India. It was well known to the doctor's friends some time before, that he had set his heart upon this work; but it is scarcely possible to convey to readers of the present day any idea of the intensity of his feeling on this subject, without using his own language, or giving the testimony of those who were eye and ear witnesses of his actions and words. To an intimate Christian friend, who had written dissuading him from the enterprise, principally on account of his age, and the difficulty, at his time of life, of learning to pronounce a new language, he replied, about a month before the Conference, thus:—"I am now dead to Europe and alive for India. God Himself has said to me, 'Go to Ceylon.' I am as much convinced of the will of God in this respect, as that I breathe; so fully convinced, that methinks I had rather be set naked on the coast of Ceylon, without clothes, and without a friend, than not go there. The Portuguese language is much spoken all round the coast of Ceylon, and indeed all along the coast of India. According to Dr. Buchanan, there are 500,000 Christians (nominal Christians, at least) in Ceylon; and there are only two ministers to take care of them. I am learning the Portuguese language continually, and I am perfectly certain I shall conquer it before I land in Ceylon. The fleets sail in October and January. If the Conference employ me to raise the money for the outset, I shall not be able to sail till January. I shall bear my own expenses, of course. I'll request you to speak to the preachers, to see whether a preacher or two can be procured, who will consent to travel with me."

The intensity of his desire to effect this object.

With these views and feelings the doctor attended the Conference, and propounded his whole plan to that assembly. Many were startled at its magnitude, others at its

daring; and there was consequently considerable opposition. But we prefer giving the account of this event as it is supplied by a manuscript in the handwriting of Mr. Clough, one of the missionaries, who was present and witnessed the whole. He says, "When the subject was first named, many rose to oppose. Mr. Benson, with great vehemence, declared that it would be the ruin of Methodism. The debate was adjourned till the day following. Dr. Coke walked down the street, leaning on Mr. Clough's arm, in unutterable agony: the tears flowed down his cheeks, and, almost broken-hearted, he retired to his room to pray. The following morning he was not at the Conference before breakfast. Mr. Clough called to inquire for him. The doctor had not come down from his room: Mr. Clough knocked at the door, and, recognising his voice, Dr. Coke asked him to walk in. There he saw the most affecting spectacle. The doctor had not been in bed, and his dishevelled silvery locks showed something of his night's distress. Mr. Clough asked what was the matter. Pointing to the floor, the doctor said, 'There I have spent hours in pleading with God in behalf of India.' They together went to the Conference. When the subject was resumed, the doctor delivered a most energetic thrilling address, which produced such an impression that it was at once moved, seconded, and carried, that the Mission should be forthwith established. Mr. Barber was either the mover or seconder. Shortly afterwards Dr. Coke called Mr. Clough out of the Conference, and they went down the street together. With joy beaming in his eye, and a full heart, Dr. Coke said, 'Did I not tell you that God would answer prayer?'"

His resource when the Conference objected.

And ultimate success.

It must not be supposed that the opposition referred to above was factious, or that the Conference was swayed,

against its judgment, to assent to this important measure by Dr. Coke's speech. Undoubtedly we must recognise the directing hand of God in the whole case, whose potent influence enabled His servants on one day to dare difficulties from which they had shrunk the day before. These difficulties, considering the embarrassed financial state of the Connexion, were very great. Yet, when the doctor detailed the providential circumstances which led him to desire the establishment of this Mission, the favourable disposition which some men in power had manifested toward the proposed object, the reasons which led him to visit the eastern regions of the globe; and especially when he presented himself, and six other preachers, who were prepared to dare all the dangers of the enterprise; and added, boldly and generously, that if the Connexion could not consistently bear the expense of the undertaking, he was prepared, out of his own private fortune, to defray the expense of the outfit to the extent of six thousand pounds; his brethren in the Conference were alike amazed at the magnitude of the work, and the manner in which it had been laid open to their efforts; and, awed into acquiescence by such a splendid example of devotion and generosity, gave their consent. It was therefore resolved, that "the Conference authorizes and appoints Dr. Coke to undertake a Mission to Ceylon and Java; and allows him to take with him six missionaries, exclusively of one for the Cape of Good Hope." It was at that time intended that three of those missionaries should settle in Ceylon, one repair to Java, and the other two travel with Dr. Coke, in such places, and in such ways, as his judgment and existing circumstances might direct.

Preparations for the Mission.

The preachers who had consented to accompany Dr. Coke in this godly enterprise, were James Lynch, William

Ault, George Erskine, William M. Harvard, Thomas H. Squance, and Benjamin Clough. The four former were already itinerant preachers; the two latter were local preachers who were now received on trial as candidates for the full ministry. These arrangements having been made, the doctor and his companions repaired to London to make preparations for their departure. The first care of Dr. Coke was to secure the services of an able Portuguese teacher, that they might all study that language, as far as their time would allow, before their embarkation. A large assortment of clothes, books, and other articles necessary for their comfort, was provided. As Mr. Harvard and Mr. Squance were acquainted with the printing business, a printing press, with types, and other necessary appliances for printing, were added to the stock. Two of these missionaries, Mr. Ault and Mr. Harvard, were married, and their wives accompanied them. Under convoy of three ships of war, these, with six regular Indiamen, and above twenty smaller merchant vessels, proceeded on their voyage.

Necessity of increased support for Methodist Missions.

The immediate prospect of Dr. Coke's departure from England led the friends of Missions among the Methodists to great searchings of heart, as to the means by which this rapidly increasing section of the work of God was to be sustained. The loss of his personal supervision might be supplied by the appointment of some other active and zealous minister to act in conjunction with the Missionary Committee; but Dr. Coke had, by his established character and indefatigable perseverance, collected a large portion of the pecuniary supplies for the support of the Missions, and, when these means failed, was ever ready to draw on his own purse to the full extent of his means. How corresponding and even enlarged supplies were to be provided when the doctor had left the country, and the necessities of

the cause had been increased by the requirements of this great enterprise in the eastern hemisphere, was a problem difficult of solution. Dr. Coke had thought of organizing Missionary Societies throughout the country before he left England; and the London Missionary Society, which was founded in 1795, had set an excellent example of organization, to a certain extent, for this purpose. Indeed, as that Society was exceedingly catholic in its constitution, and embraced Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Independents amongst its promoters, there was a danger lest a part of the support which those Missions that were strictly and properly Methodist had every reason to expect, should be diverted from them into the funds of this more general, but truly excellent, institution; unless means were devised for exhibiting the claims of the Methodist Missions in as public and popular a manner as was used to procure support for the London Society.

Means adopted to provide for the emergency.

The Methodists, however, did not sit supinely inactive amid these growing necessities. It was not as is stated by mistake in a respectable and interesting work:* "In the state of anxious inquiry occasioned by the death of Dr. Coke," "the Rev. George Morley, of the Leeds Circuit, suggested to his brethren in that District, and the friends in general, the propriety of forming a Missionary Society in the town of Leeds." The suggestion above referred to was put forth at least as early as September, 1813, full three months before Dr. Coke left the shores of England on his voyage to India.

In no place could an effort of this kind have been made with greater hope of success at this time than in Leeds.

* "The Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society. By John Morison, D.D.," vol. i., p. 189.

Formation of a Missionary Society for the Leeds District.

Mr. Morley, who desired the formation of such an institution, was superintendent of the Circuit; Mr. Bunting, whose comprehensive and ardent mind was devoted to the cause of Missions, was chairman of the District. Many of the Methodists there were wealthy, most of them open-hearted and zealous; so much so, that, there being no Methodist organization for receiving small sums for missionary purposes, several Methodist families were known "to be in the habit of contributing weekly or monthly contributions towards the support of Missions belonging to another religious community." The subject having been well considered, an address was issued, proposing the formation of a Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District; and assigning, as reasons for such a course, the "increasing opportunities of evangelizing heathen nations, the excellent example of other Christian Societies, and the loss of the personal exertions of Dr. Coke." The first of these "principally refers to the facilities and protection afforded, by a recent enactment of the legislature, to all who are desirous of propagating the religion of Jesus Christ in Hindostan and the neighbouring countries." The second reason, as was observed at the time, if it refers to raising funds by quarterly, monthly, or weekly subscriptions, is very strange, inasmuch as by adopting this course the Methodists only imitated that which other Societies had previously borrowed from Methodism. Long and violently had the Methodists been reproached for resorting to this means for the support of the ministry. Time, however, which tests the soundness or fallacy of all institutions, showed the excellence of this; and it was adopted by all parties for the support of Bible, Missionary, and Tract Societies. Probably, however, this part of the address referred principally to the holding of public

meetings, and other parts of the organization of Missionary Societies.

The public meeting.

The publication of this address was soon followed by arrangements for holding a public meeting for the purpose of inaugurating a Missionary Society for the District. This meeting was convened for two o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday, the 6th of October, 1813. Messrs. Buckley and Watson preached preparatory sermons. Mr. Watson complied in this instance with very great reluctance. He had but recently returned to the Connexion. This plan was quite new in Methodism; and he naturally thought that, under these circumstances, his taking a prominent part in the introductory services would lay him open to the imputation of introducing injurious novelties. His objections, however, were overruled, and he submitted to the judgment of his brethren. Mr. Buckley preached on the Tuesday evening at Armley, and Mr. Watson on the Wednesday morning at Albion Street chapel, Leeds. This sermon, which was a remarkable specimen of pulpit oratory, produced a great impression. The text was, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." (Ezek. xxxvii. 9.) From these words the preacher gave a just and striking view of the state of the heathen, the power of the Gospel, and the obligation which rests upon the church to make provision for its universal publication. This sermon was afterward printed, and its extensive circulation was made a great blessing to the cause of Missions.

The meeting which had been announced was, however, the great feature of the movement. When the hour for holding it arrived, almost every one shrunk from the serious responsibility of entering upon the work. Here, as in the preliminary arrangements, the judgment, decision,

and energy of Mr. Bunting cleared away every difficulty. A hymn was sung, and earnest prayer offered to almighty God, after which Mr. Thomas Thompson, M.P., of Hull, was called to preside. He did so, and delivered a brief address, in which he referred to the missionary operations of the Methodist Connexion and of other religious bodies, and urged on the congregation becoming seriousness of feeling and demeanour during the course of the meeting. The first resolution was moved by the venerable Mr. James Wood, and seconded by Mr. William Warrener, who had been many years a missionary in the West Indies, and was at this time labouring in the Selby Circuit. The second resolution was moved by Mr. Charles Atmore. The third, by Mr. George Morley, of Leeds. The fourth, by Mr. W. G. Scarth, of Leeds. The fifth, by Mr. John Braithwaite, of Huddersfield. The sixth, by Mr. John Wood, of Wakefield. The seventh, by Mr. William Dawson. Mr. Thomas Vasey, of Halifax, moved the tenth resolution. Mr. James Buckley, of Wakefield, moved the twelfth; and Mr. Jabez Bunting the sixteenth. We have only mentioned the names of those speakers whose able addresses on this most interesting occasion have been preserved for our perusal by the ability and kind care of a gentleman who was present. Our limits forbid our attempting to give even an outline of them; but they richly deserve the attention of all Methodists and lovers of Missions.*

In the course of the meeting the Rev. Mr. Eccles, minister of the Independent congregation at Whitechapel, and one of the secretaries to the West Riding Missionary

* "A Report of the principal Speeches delivered at the Formation of the Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District, October 6th, 1813. By JAMES NICHOLS." Fifth Edition. Simpkin and Marshall; Mason.

Society, a branch of that which is now denominated "the London Missionary," stated that he had attended for the purpose of testifying the good wishes of himself and his friends for the Society then being instituted by the Methodists. Those members of the Methodist Connexion who had promised subscriptions to the former Society, would now, of course, support the latter, as one which belonged peculiarly to their own body. The missionary cause was but one cause; and the various Societies, though, like ships in harbour, they might seem to crowd each other, would have room enough when they put out to sea. He wished that all Christians should consider themselves as one body in this great work.

Toward the close of the meeting, Mr. Eccles again rose, and a second time urged on the meeting the duty of separation under the impression that the missionary cause is but ONE, and that in which all denominations of Christians are united. Mr. Bunting, believing that such statements might lead uninformed persons into misconception, set the whole case luminously before the people by the following brief address:—

Clear exposition of the case by Mr. Bunting.

"Mr. Chairman, I agree with Mr. Eccles that the missionary cause ought to be regarded as strictly and eminently ONE. It is ONE in its grand object, as it aims at promoting the glory of God, and the universal spread and influence of truth. It is ONE, also, as it unites the affections and good wishes of all genuine Christians, however different may be the external forms which it assumes, or the external agency by which it is carried on. For myself and for the friends who surround me, I can assure Mr. Eccles, that we most cordially and fervently desire the success of all missionary institutions, among every denomination of Christians; and I hope those who have it in their power

will not be backward to contribute to them all. At the same time I must be allowed to remind the meeting that there is no common fund in existence, out of which all missionary establishments may claim and receive pecuniary assistance. The cause is ONE; but it is promoted by *several* distinct Societies, each of which has its *distinct* and *separate fund.* An impression of a contrary kind has, I know, prevailed in some quarters; and, though I am sure Mr. Eccles did not design to confirm that impression, I felt it necessary to state the matter in its true light, in order that the present exertions of the Methodists in this vicinity, on behalf of their own particular department of the great missionary service, may appear to be, as they really are, imperiously required. Mr. Eccles has very properly compared the different Missionary Societies to ships, which, though sometimes crowded while in harbour together, will all find room enough when they go forth into the broad sea. Now, Sir, all I mean to say is, that the Methodist missionary ship is one, among others, of the grand fleet by which it is intended to carry to the ends of the earth the blessings of the Gospel; that this ship, like the rest, must be manned, freighted, and provisioned for the voyage; and that our most strenuous efforts, and those of our friends, are necessary to fit it for the sea, and to prepare it for the service on which it is destined to proceed. Other denominations are particularly concerned for their own respective ships; and we must particularly care for ours. But our sincere and ardent prayer is, that God may send them *all* a safe and prosperous voyage!" *

At the request of the general meeting, "An Address to the Public" was prepared by Mr. Watson, in which the extent and importance of the Methodist Missions were

* MR. NICHOLS'S "Report," p. 40. Fifth Edition.

briefly stated. It was shown that, besides about forty ministers who were labouring in the most destitute parts of England and Wales in a purely missionary character, the Connexion had about sixty missionaries engaged amongst the Papists of Ireland, and in various Missions in foreign lands; and the claims of these efforts on the liberality of British Christians were ably and energetically enforced. Many thousand copies of this "Address" were circulated. The financial result of the movement was the remittance from the District of £1,000 to the treasurer in London in less than twelve months.

Happy results of this movement.

The example thus nobly set by the Leeds District was speedily followed. Before the ensuing Conference, similar Meetings were held, and Societies organized, in the Halifax, York, Sheffield, Cornwall, and Newcastle Districts. The Connexion, indeed, appeared to awake and rise up, in a great measure at least, to a just consideration of the weighty responsibility which the wretchedness and danger of the heathen world had laid on those who richly enjoy every New Covenant blessing. A new era in Methodism was thus inaugurated, a prelude of such progress in the civilization and religion of mankind, at no very distant day, as perhaps the world had never seen before,—certainly never since the apostolic age.

This year will also be always memorable in Methodist history for one of the most remarkable and extensive revivals of religion ever known in this or any other country. It took place in the west of Cornwall, and extended more or less over the whole of the peninsula below Truro.

The great revival in Cornwall.

This extraordinary work of grace was first seen at Redruth. All the meetings for worship had been well attended for some time before; more than usual seriousness was

perceptible among the people, and their religious assemblies were characterized by great solemnity. But nothing beyond this was observed until Sunday, February 13th, 1814, when, in the Society meeting held in Redruth chapel, after the evening preaching, just before it was intended to close the service, Mr. Haime, the minister, mentioned some pleasing instances of the visible good in several parts of the Circuit. Whilst this was going on, one young woman, who had been several weeks in great sorrow through a deep conviction of her sin and danger, began to cry aloud for mercy. Prayers were offered to God on her behalf, and, before the meeting closed, she was delivered from her burden of guilt and fear, and found peace with God. In the mean time another young woman was known to be in deep distress; but she went away without receiving comfort. The following morning, Mr. Truscott, the superintendent preacher, visited her, and, while he was praying, the Lord spoke peace to her soul, and she was enabled to rejoice in God. On the following Thursday, at a prayer-meeting held in a dwelling-house, eight persons obtained a sense of the Divine favour; and the following evening, at a prayer-meeting in the workhouse of the town, attended by Mr. Truscott and Mr. Morris, the junior preacher, many were in deep distress, and some experienced much Divine consolation. On Sunday, the 20th, the gracious influence was very generally prevalent in Redruth. About forty members were added to the Classes in the town, and six or eight of them found deliverance from the guilt of sin. Mr. Morris preached in the afternoon, and he had no sooner finished his sermon than "multitudes began to cry earnestly for mercy," and continued thus, until six o'clock, the time of the evening service, except in the case of those who during that time

found peace with God. These mingled the songs of praise with the agonizing cries of the mourners. The evening service began at the usual time, and Mr. Morris was able to deliver his sermon, although the people were so wrought upon, that an entire suppression of their feelings was impossible. But after preaching was ended, they lifted up their voices in prayer and praise in a most extraordinary manner; and thus they continued, and could not be prevailed on to separate, until after one o'clock on Monday morning.

Preaching began at seven o'clock (the usual hour) on Monday evening. During the service many persons were so deeply affected that they could not wholly suppress their feelings; but the sermon was delivered; after which the congregation remained in earnest prayer. Great numbers were in an agony of distress on account of their sins; and several found peace with God, and were filled with joy in believing. It was two o'clock on the following morning before the congregation could be induced to leave the chapel. These remarkable scenes produced a deep impression on all the neighbourhood. The author has now at his side a pious miner who had been a member of Society some years before this occurrence, and has continued such ever since. He remembers distinctly having been engaged one day that week labouring in the depths of one of the mines of Camborne, when the managing agent, in the course of his usual inspection, asked a miner from Redruth, who was on the spot, what this strange work was. The miner expressed his assurance that the general impression in the neighbourhood was, that it was a great work of God; and intimated that many thought it preparatory to the end of the world.

On Tuesday, February 22nd, the power of God so

affected great numbers, that they spontaneously crowded to the chapel before noon to seek relief in earnest prayer. This was continued throughout the day, and the whole of the following night. Many, during this time, obtained deliverance from the burden of their guilt and sin; and many others were so convinced of their spiritual danger, that the number of penitents in deep distress rather increased than diminished. The chapel could not be cleared until four o'clock on the following morning.

Its remarkable progress.

On Wednesday, at noon, Mr. Truscott, the superintendent, met those who were recommended by leaders for admission into Society; when, although the time was certainly unfavourable for a large attendance, more than eighty presented themselves as applicants for this privilege, and were directed to Classes. They all appeared to be deeply concerned for their salvation: many, after having suffered deep distress, had been brought into the experience of much Divine consolation. With those who thus received notes of admission, many came who were seeking pardoning mercy: those were followed by others in a similar state of mind. This constant succession of penitents continued in such numbers, that the chapel could not be cleared until nine o'clock on the following morning; and this was for a very temporary interval. Penitent sinners were again in the chapel before twelve o'clock that day, crying to God for mercy. The chapel was occupied during the whole of the night. On the Friday the chapel was occupied the whole of the day, and in the evening the crowd was greater than it had ever been before. The agonizing cries of so many persons for the forgiveness of their sins filled the house. As far as it was possible, they were directed to the great atonement, and taught to believe on Christ; but this generally appeared to have little effect.

The several persons thus affected generally seemed absorbed in the weight of woe and sense of the Divine wrath which rested on them, and scarcely listened to any teaching, but cried in mighty prayer to God, until, under the teaching of His Spirit, they were enabled to believe to the saving of their souls. The chapel continued thus occupied the whole of the night, during which time several respectable and educated young men were found among the mourners, who returned to their homes in the morning happy in God. All the early part of Saturday the superintendent was again occupied in giving notes of admission, and in appointing the converts to Classes.

By this time the work had spread to other places. A young man, the eldest son of a very respectable Methodist family in Tuckingmill, had been at Redruth, about two and a half miles distant, the whole of the Friday night, and returned home, full of Divine peace and love, on the Saturday morning. He appeared, in this altered state of mind, just in time for family worship, and his presence produced deep feeling in the family, as they joined in morning prayer; and, while the pious father was conducting this service, one of the servants began to cry aloud. This was heard by some customers in the shop, who begged to be allowed to join the family in their devotions. This measure produced an increased number of penitents. Neighbours flocked in; and the worship was protracted for some hours, until at length increasing numbers compelled them to adjourn to the chapel, which was soon filled. The number of persons in deep distress was so great, and they were so earnest, that, when seven o'clock, the usual hour for preaching, arrived, the preacher found that he could not be heard, so that all idea of preaching

was given up; and Mr. Truscott went among the penitents, endeavouring to direct them to Jesus.

The Sunday following, this great and marvellous work of God became general in the immediate neighbourhood: at Camborne, Troon, and other neighbouring chapels, the people thronged together, under deep religious feeling, intent on securing their salvation. From thence it extended east, west, and south, until, in a greater or lesser degree, throughout the whole peninsula from Truro, nearly forty miles long, and from the Lizard to the north coast, every parish was visited, and souls were converted to God. In some parts the influence appeared to be more general and abiding than in others; but it seemed as if a mighty and prevalent breeze of saving grace swept over the whole district. The chapels in some places were occupied night and day for a week; in others, for two, three, or four weeks. In the towns, although the salutary impression produced was very great, it was less marked than in some of the rural parishes. In the most favoured of these there were not more than from ten to twenty persons who were not brought to a great extent under this gracious influence. During the progress of this blessed work, although the chapels were generally sought as the most eligible places of resort by those who were convinced of their sin and danger, yet the work was not exclusively confined to these sanctuaries. The deepest recesses of the mines re-echoed with sounds of agonizing prayer to God and songs of praise for His pardoning mercy. In those gloomy excavations the pious would gather around their penitent comrades, until God heard prayer on their behalf, and their mourning was turned into joy. The houses provided for dressing the ores, and preparing them for the market, were often similarly employed. In these places prayer-meetings were fre-

quently held with the most blessed results, and numerous conversions attested the presence and power of God.

Its sterling character and blessed results.

It is difficult to speak of the nature of this work in general terms. Among such numbers, that there were some who were but partially affected, and whose real religious improvement was very superficial, cannot be doubted. But it was the unanimous opinion of those who fairly observed its progress, whether they were Methodists or otherwise, that this was a great work of God. Throughout the mining district of Redruth and Camborne, where it was most influential, not a whisper was heard expressing a contrary judgment. Indeed, deep seriousness sat on every countenance; and those who never professed to have been brought under religious influence, seemed, by their altered and grave demeanour, as if they were awe-stricken in the presence of God. Nor must it be supposed that those who professed to have found pardon generally deluded themselves, or were persuaded to adopt a groundless opinion. On the contrary, the convictions of sin, guilt, and consequent danger, were deep,—most intensely so. Many wrestled with God for eight, ten, twelve, and even sixteen hours on their knees consecutively, before they found the comfort they desired. A fine strong miner, having a thick woollen jacket on his arm, such as miners wear when engaged at the surface of the mine in the depth of winter, during the early part of this revival was met by a local preacher, who asked him where he was going. "I am going," replied the man, "over to Troon chapel. I have been there twice before, for some hours, praying to God to pardon my sins; but I have found no relief yet; but I am determined now to find mercy before I return." "But," said the preacher, "if you are going to chapel, what are you about to do with your flannel jacket?" "Why,"

said the man, "kneeling upon the hard floor so many hours makes one very sore; and, as I am determined to find mercy this time, I take my jacket to kneel on." It will be readily seen that men who could seek God with such steady earnestness and determination, would crowd much godly repentance and earnest prayer into a brief space of time.

It is opposed, but successfully defended.

It was not to be expected, however, that such an extensive work could begin and end without opposition. This revival was assailed by two antagonists, who attacked from very different quarters. The Rev. C. Val. Le Grice, a clergyman of Penzance, preached a sermon in the episcopal chapel of that town, which was almost immediately afterward published in London. It was entitled, "Proofs of the Spirit: or, Considerations on Revivalism." In this pamphlet the revival was denounced and held up to ridicule as a wicked contrivance,—a delusion,—and calculated greatly to damage the cause of true religion. Mr. Richard Treffry, Sen., replied to this publication in a letter to the reverend author, in which the allegations he had put forth were triumphantly refuted. The doctrines asserted in the sermon were proved to be groundless; and the extraordinary work of grace vindicated as thoroughly reasonable and religious. Mr. Le Grice made no reply; indeed, the masculine vigour of Mr. Treffry, and the irresistible force of his argumentation, put this out of the question. But an anonymous writer, endeavouring to support the cause which he had espoused, came to his aid with "An Essay on Enthusiasm." This effort was vain: left to itself, it could have produced little effect; but it was completely demolished by a withering and caustic reply from the pen of Mr. Francis Truscott.

The other antagonist of the Methodist revival was Mr.

James Cornish, then a young surgeon residing at Falmouth. He sent a letter to the "Medical Review," in which he exhibited this extraordinary movement as an epidemic disease, brought on by the alarming sermons addressed to the people by the preachers. This writer asserted that it affected none but persons with minds of the lowest order. In endeavouring to maintain these unfounded assumptions, he could find no vestige of support in science, reason, or fact. Indeed, in this feeble attempt to produce something witty and clever, he only succeeded in bringing forth a weak parody,—a ridiculous caricature; and, in doing this, treated a very serious subject with a levity bordering on profaneness. Mr. Truscott, in a letter to the "Methodist Magazine,"* showed the true character of this unworthy effort.

The undoubted moral and religious effects of this revival.

The moral and religious results of this work formed its best vindication, its enemies themselves being judges. Drunkards became temperate, rogues honest, profane persons devout: indeed, the public character of some neighbourhoods was quite changed, the inhabitants having learned to fear God and work righteousness.

The extent to which this gracious influence was effectual in the reformation of sinners cannot be told. The number of members in the Circuits more or less affected by this revival, namely, Redruth, Truro, St. Austell, Bodmin, Penzance, and Helston, at the Conference of 1813, was 9,405. In the following year the return gave 14,616, being a net increase of above 5,200 members brought in from the world from February to June, and judged sufficiently established in piety to be worthy of being recognised as members of a Christian church. But there is every reason to believe that this is a very inadequate estimate of

* "Methodist Magazine," 1814, pp. 547–551.

the number of persons brought under sound religious influence at this time. The number of members in these Circuits at the following Conference was 14,296, being a decrease of little more than 300. As most of the persons within reach of Methodist influence in this District were by this revival brought into connexion with the Society, few further additions could be made in the next two or three years; and the decrease above-named is little more than half the number of members that might be expected to die in twelve months; so that, if we rely fully on these figures, we might suppose there were no backsliders. There must, therefore, have been a reserve—and, probably, a considerable one—of persons who were not judged sufficiently established to be received fully as members of Society. A reasonable allowance having been made for these, it will be seen that a very great number of persons indeed were at this period brought under the influence of spiritual religion. Marvellous in its extent was this wonderful work of grace.

The Conference of 1814.

Important changes introduced.

The Conference of 1814 was held in Bristol, and began July 25th. The first acts of the assembled preachers on this occasion exhibited a great departure from all previous usage in two most important particulars. Hitherto the president and secretary had been elected by the votes of the hundred preachers, who composed what is generally called "the legal Hundred," or Conference. Now, however, it was agreed, before the election of those officers took place, that all the preachers who had been in the ministry fourteen years and upwards, should be admitted to vote at this election; and, to cut off all doubt as to the legality of this action, the persons thus selected were referred to the "legal Hundred" afterward, who confirmed this election by their separate vote.

The other change made at this time respected the manner of filling up the vacancies caused by death or retirement in the hundred preachers constituting the legal Conference. This had previously been done according to seniority; the preachers who had laboured longest in the work of the ministry being taken to supply such vacancies in regular succession. It was now agreed that in every four vacancies, three should be supplied as heretofore; and the fourth, by the ballot of the Conference, without regard to the length of time any candidate might have been in the ministry.

These simple alterations formed a vast development of the Methodist economy. The number of preachers at this time in the Connexion was, according to Mr. Crowther, 842. The members of "the legal Hundred" would, therefore, always be a small minority in every Conference. Chosen, as they had been, by seniority, they would always represent the most mature sense and feeling of the Methodist ministry, but certainly not its fullest intellectual vigour, practical energy, and zeal. By opening the door so as to admit one in every four added to this body without respect to age, a means was created for introducing every man of intellectual eminence into the Hundred, and thus making that body, as far as possible, a representation of the age, excellence, and energy of the ministry. The plan of allowing all the preachers who had travelled fourteen years to vote on the election of president and secretary, was a no less important and salutary change. The previous practice worked very well as it was left by Wesley. At his death the number of preachers in Great Britain was 291. The "legal Hundred" would, therefore, be little more than the senior half of the preachers in full Connexion. At this time, however, when the whole num-

ber was trebled, the case was greatly altered. The members of "the Hundred" present at any Conference would be but a small and aged minority of the active working ministry; and, being separated so far from them in age, might not always—perhaps but seldom—select such men for the principal offices in the body, as would be the choice and secure the confidence of the preachers generally; and, with the continued increase of the Connexion, this inconvenience would go on increasing, until the evil, dreaded from the date of the Deed of Declaration, would really have come, and "the Hundred" would be a ruling aristocracy in the Methodist ministry. The measure now adopted averted this evil entirely. By giving preachers of fourteen years' standing a vote for the president and secretary, it made these officers the actual choice of the matured Methodist ministry; while by this means, and the *election* of every fourth man into "the Hundred," the distinction between that body and their brethren, which was fast becoming invidious, was rendered one of increasing affection and respect.

Election of Mr. Bunting into "the Hundred," and to be secretary.

An individual who, although a preacher of but fifteen years' standing, had commended himself to the attention and respect of his brethren by uncommon ability, energy, and zeal, was the first person whose position was affected by both these changes in Methodist usage. Mr. Jabez Bunting was the first preacher who, without regard to seniority, was selected by ballot and received into "the Hundred;" and, being thus qualified for the office, he was, by a majority of the votes of all the preachers of fourteen years' standing, selected to be secretary to the Conference, and formally inducted into that office. It is more than probable, that the evident desirableness of this step hastened the enactment of the improved regulations detailed above.

Mr. Bunting had been previously sub-secretary; and in that subordinate post had displayed so much wisdom and aptitude for business, that the importance to the Connexion of his being placed in a prominent and influential position was too generally apparent to be obstructed by any mere routine usage. A plan was accordingly devised which not only met this individual case, but also introduced a great improvement in the general working of the Methodist system.

The transactions of the Conference.

Dr. Adam Clarke was at this Conference elected president a second time. The number of Circuits in Great Britain were now 292, and in Ireland 49, together 341, being an increase of 5 on the year. The Scilly Isles, Cardiff (Welsh), Swansea (Welsh), Brecon (Welsh), Merthyr (Welsh), Carmarthen (Welsh), Lampeter, Ballyconnel, and Brampton ceased to be reckoned as Circuits; and Chelmsford, Newport Pagnell, Ampthill, Maidstone, Market Harborough, St. David's, Clitheroe, Dunfermline, Elgin, Killesandra, Haslingden, Glastonbury, Framlingham, and Kingswood were entered on the list, and numbered as Circuits. The number of members in the Societies of Great Britain and Ireland were, at this time, 203,273, being an increase in the year of 12,500; and, in British America and the West Indies, 18,572, being an increase of 1,830. Mr. Walter Griffith, the ex-president, was appointed to preside over the ensuing Irish Conference. Public collections, or applications for private subscriptions within certain prescribed limits, were authorized to be made on behalf of one hundred and fourteen needy chapel trusts.

Several of the Districts having followed the example of Leeds, and formed Missionary Auxiliary Societies, the Conference published a strong recommendation that every

District in the kingdom would pursue a similar course. The thanks of the Conference were also voted to the preachers in the Leeds, Halifax, York, Sheffield, Cornwall, and Newcastle Districts, who had been concerned in the formation of the Missionary Societies; and to all the members and friends of these Societies for their liberal and zealous support. Mr. James Wood was appointed general treasurer, and Messrs. Edmondson and Buckley joint secretaries, to the General Missionary Society. It was also resolved to solicit annual subscriptions in aid of the public collections for the support of the Kingswood and Woodhouse Grove Schools. Committees were as usual appointed for the management of these educational establishments. And it was resolved that a loyal address should be presented to the Prince Regent, expressing devoted attachment to the person and government of the sovereign, gratitude for religious privileges, and for the restoration of peace in Europe; and earnestly entreating his Royal Highness to use his utmost endeavours to prevent the threatened revival of the African Slave Trade.

Before this Conference was held, the vessels which had carried Dr. Coke and his missionary companions from the shores of England had safely reached India; and letters were written to England announcing the melancholy fact that Dr. Coke had died suddenly at sea, on the 3rd of May, and his remains had been committed to the mighty deep. Intelligence of this sad bereavement reached England in November, just in time for insertion in the December number of the "Methodist Magazine," by which means the whole Connexion was informed of the painful fact, and involved in deep and universal sorrow.

As all particulars connected with the great enterprise which Dr. Coke had organized, his sudden and lamented

death, and the future conduct and fortunes of his surviving companions, must be considered most important elements of Methodist history, we shall narrate them as fully as our limits will allow.

The voyage of the missionaries to India.

When the commodore received his final dispatches off Falmouth, on the 2nd of January, and directed the course of the fleet towards the ocean, Dr. Coke seemed exceedingly delighted, as though he had now fairly entered on the great work to which he had devoted his life. The missionaries were embarked in two vessels. Dr. Coke, Mr. Harvard and his wife, and Mr. Clough, on board the "Cabalva," Captain Birch; and Mr. Ault and his wife, with Messrs. Lynch, Erskine, Squance, and M'Kenny, in the "Lady Melville," Captain Lochner, with six regular Indiamen and about twenty smaller sailing vessels, under convoy of three ships of war, proceeded on their voyage. Dr. Coke had so often sailed from the shores of England, that he felt nothing but delight in the prospect of missionary success; but this was not the case with all his companions. Mr. Clough was a young man, leaving his home and friends for the first time, and, as it then seemed to him, for ever. He was, therefore, deeply affected, and especially when, between seven and eight o'clock in the evening, the Lizard light began to wax dim, through the increasing distance which intervened. With trembling emotion he asked the doctor to go on deck, and take a last look at the light. He did so with evident pleasure, and immediately proposed a prayer-meeting. This was, indeed, his constant practice while on board, on every occasion of special interest or concern.

In two days they entered the Bay of Biscay; after which, for three weeks, they had very rough weather. On the 10th of February, whilst Dr. Coke and his companions

were at breakfast, they were informed that the "Lady Melville" had hoisted her flag half-mast high, the usual signal that some one had died on board. This immediately led to the apprehension that Mrs. Ault had been removed from time into eternity. She had been in a very delicate state of health for some time; and her physician had declared that her only hope of recovery lay in her removal to a very warm climate. Their conjecture proved to be true. Mrs. Ault died "with a strong confidence in God, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and a calm resignation to the Divine will;" and her body was, with due solemnity and Christian rites, committed to the bosom of the mighty deep.

On the 20th of April they rounded the Cape of Good Hope, in very stormy weather, which occasioned the loss of several men; and on the 23rd passed the Isle of Bourbon; on the 24th, the Isle of France; and, by the 27th, were abreast of the little isle of Gallega. They were, of course, bearing directly for the coast of India. Dr. Coke, during the whole of the voyage, had so assiduously devoted himself to the acquirement of the languages and knowledge requisite to enable him to prosecute the Indian Mission with success, that his friends frequently feared that he would thereby endanger his health. The ardour of his mind, and the intensity with which he gave himself to this work, may be gathered from the following extract from his journal written while at sea: "I have a most charming study. It has two large windows that open from the stern to the sea, and my elbow-chair and my table are placed in the most convenient situation possible. Here I employ almost all my time, and nearly the whole of it in reading and writing Portuguese, excepting my hours of meditation, which, indeed, I can hardly except; for my

chief study is my Portuguese Bible. O, how sweet is the word of God! I have loved it since I came into this ship more than ever I did before.

Religious devotedness of Dr. Coke.

> 'Jesus gives me, in His word,
> Food and medicine, shield and sword.'

I now feel, I think, more than ever the value of retirement, silence, and tranquillity of mind; and can say of my God what Virgil did of his Augustus: '*Deus nobis hæc otia fecit:*' 'God Himself has favoured me with these leisure hours.' And yet I cannot repent of the thousands of hours which I have spent in the most vile, the most glorious drudgery of begging from house to house. The tens of thousands of pounds which I have raised for the Missions, and the beneficial effects thereof, form an ample compensation for all the time and labour. The whole was in God. But what would my heart have felt, if all the Missions already established had been left without support on my departure from England? But it was the work of God. He alone began it, and He alone increased it; and (if I may presume so to express myself with humble modesty) He has bound Himself to support it. He, therefore, before I sailed, said to the north, 'Bring forth;' and to the south, 'Keep not back.' The *west*, also, is coming forwards. The sister island has taken the flame; and the highly favoured *British Isles* conspire to spread our Missions throughout the world. How light it has made my heart! Next to union and communion with God, nothing could afford me such high satisfaction. I hasten to Asia with alacrity and joy. And yet I must confess, that if the clouds had been ever so obscure, if all human aid had apparently been withdrawn from those Missions, the interests of which are so interwoven with the very strings of my heart, my Divine call to Asia has been so indubitably clear,

that I should have been obliged to have thrown everything into the hands of my God, and to have said to Him, 'Here I am, send me' to Asia."

In this spirit and temper of mind Dr. Coke continued to labour with such assiduity and success that, although sixty-seven years of age, he in a short time obtained a competent knowledge of Portuguese, so as to be able to write several sermons in that language, and translate some hymns into it. But all this was, according to the disposal of an inscrutable Providence, to terminate in a manner the most unexpected and afflictive. On the 1st of May, Dr. Coke just hinted that he felt himself rather indisposed; but his complaint was of such a trifling nature, that neither himself nor his companions viewed it in any serious light. The following day he was just the same; his indisposition was not removed, nor did he perceive it to increase. "He conversed as usual, and walked the deck at his accustomed hour. In the evening, as he was about to retire to rest, he requested Mr. Clough to give him from their chest a little medicine. With this request Mr. Clough instantly complied, offering at the same time to sit up with him during the night. But this offer was refused by Dr. Coke, who did not think himself so much indisposed as to render such attention necessary. He, therefore, on retiring to rest, took his fellow missionaries by the hand, and, in his usual manner, commended them to God. This was the last time his voice was ever heard.

His death.

"To improve his moments to the utmost, it had been his constant practice, while on board, to rise every morning at half-past five; and, to prevent him from sleeping beyond his accustomed time, the servant who attended him had received orders to call him from his bed at the appointed hour. On the morning of the 3rd of May, the servant

knocked as usual at the cabin door, but, after several efforts, being unable to procure any reply, he ventured to open the door. This being done, he discovered, to his utter astonishment, the mortal remains of Dr. Coke, lifeless, cold, and nearly stiff, on the cabin floor.

"The servant, on making this discovery, hastened to the apartment of Captain Birch, making him acquainted with the melancholy tidings. Captain Birch, on hearing of the event, immediately sent for Mr. Clough, and communicated to him the awful information. Mr. Clough instantly hastened to Mr. Harvard, and imparted to him the tale of woe. Both then proceeded to the cabin of Dr. Coke, and saw that the catastrophe, which they would gladly have disbelieved, was mournfully true.

"The corpse had, by this time, been taken from the floor, and laid on the bed; but, from the placidity which rested on the countenance, it did not seem to have been agitated by any convulsive throes. The head appeared to be a little turned toward one shoulder; but, with this exception, no distortion whatever was visible. As soon as the agitation, which the sudden shock had occasioned, had a little subsided, they requested the surgeon of the ship to examine the body. With this request he readily complied; and the result of his examination was, the probability that his death was occasioned by a fit of apoplexy, to which, from the make of his body, and the nature of his constitution, he appeared to have been somewhat predisposed. But of this fact no satisfactory evidence can be either expected or obtained, as he died suddenly, and alone.

"It was supposed by those on board, that he must have risen from his bed, either to procure something that was not within his reach, or to call assistance, as he found his indisposition to increase; but the stroke coming suddenly

on him with irresistible violence, he fell immediately on the floor, and instantly expired in that position in which he was found by the servant. It is furthermore presumed, that his death must have happened about midnight. If it had been much earlier, his fall must have been heard by some in the adjoining cabins who had not retired long to rest; and if it had been later, his body could not have been stiff and cold. Divided from his cabin only by a thin wainscot partition were the cabins of Captain Birch and Mr. Harvard; but, as neither of them heard the least noise from his apartment, it is fairly to be presumed that he expired without a struggle or a groan." *

We have given the account of this melancholy event, which was compiled at the time by those who had the best sources of information, and every disposition to elicit the truth fairly and fully; and from which it appears to us as a most inscrutable providence. By the kindness of Captain Birch, a boat was sent with a letter to the "Lady Melville," to inform the missionaries on board that vessel of their sad bereavement,—intelligence which soon brought the whole band into melancholy council on board the "Cabalva." At first, it was earnestly desired by the missionaries that the body should be preserved, and sent home, in compliance with Dr. Coke's will, for interment in the family vault at Brecon, with his two wives. But when Captain Birch was consulted on this proposal, although he entertained and considered it with great kindness, he offered such weighty reasons against making such an attempt, that it was judged expedient to commit the body to the deep. This was done with all solemnity. Mr. Harvard read the burial service, and the coffin was lowered into the sea in the presence of the crew and passengers crowded on the deck, to whom,

* Drew's "Life of Dr. Coke," p. 359.

immediately afterward, Mr. Ault delivered an impressive and affecting address.

The death of Dr. Coke must always be regarded as a memorable event in the history of Methodism. No man, down to this time, had died in the Connexion, since the death of Wesley, who had exercised such an extensive influence over the whole family of Methodism. With a deep concern for the progress of that body, and the extension of its evangelical usefulness, he clearly perceived the defective and anomalous position of its ministers after the removal of Wesley, carefully studied the nature and extent of the want, and earnestly and perseveringly struggled to provide a remedy, and to place the Connexion in a sound, effective, and healthy ecclesiastical position. He was not possessed of the requisite genius and intellectual power for the successful attainment of this great object. He did, however, what perhaps, for the interests of true religion, was an equally important work. He organized and extended the Methodism of America; fostered, defended, and promoted the Missions to British America and the West Indies; gave a mighty impulse to the promulgation of the Gospel in the most destitute parts of England, Ireland, and Wales; laboured to introduce an evangelical agency into France and Gibraltar; and, finally, inaugurated a great and effective missionary aggression on Asia; and, besides all this, paid constant attention to the general interests of the Connexion, and the religious condition of the world; and laboured in season and out of season to promote the cause of his Saviour, and the extension of the kingdom of Christ.

Embarrassment of the missionaries.

Their head being removed, the missionaries were left in a state of great perplexity as to their future action; for so little had Dr. Coke contemplated the probability of his

sudden removal, that he had not made them acquainted with the course which he intended to pursue on landing. This difficulty was increased by their separation; for the missionary passengers on board the two vessels had no farther opportunity of consulting together, from the time of Dr. Coke's funeral, until their arrival at Bombay about three weeks afterward.

Some of the passengers looked on the missionaries thus deprived of their leader with pity, and others with feelings nearly akin to contempt. One gay gentleman earnestly advised them, on reaching Bombay, to state their case to the government, and beg for a free passage to England. They told him they could not do that, as they were determined to attempt the conversion of the natives of India. He laughed them to scorn, and assured them the thing was impossible. They replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God, and our trust is in God." "O," said he, "if you take God into the account, I have nothing to say." On landing at Bombay they repaired to an hotel, where, having examined Dr. Coke's papers, they found nothing which warranted them to act as his executors, or draw money in his name, or on account of the Missionary Society. And they had so fully confided in his fatherly care, that all the money they collectively possessed would scarcely obtain a day's provision. In those painful circumstances they sought refuge in prayer, and earnestly pleaded the promises which God had made to His people. They were, however, soon relieved. They drew up a plain statement of their case, and presented it to Captain Birch, who had evinced the greatest kindness towards them, especially since the decease of Dr. Coke. That gentleman interested himself in their favour, and introduced them to Mr. Money, a banker of the city,

to whom, as it providentially happened, Dr. Coke had obtained a letter of recommendation from a friend before he left England. This letter Mr. Harvard, at the same time, presented to Mr. Money. That gentleman immediately offered to advance whatever money they required to carry out their object, on the credit of the Society at home, and assured them that, but for his delicate health, he would himself have accompanied them to wait on the governor. This service, however, was rendered by Captain Birch. So that, after all these varied vicissitudes and trials, the missionaries found the way open before them to enter on their work.

They are relieved by the kindness of Mr. Money.

The intelligence of Dr. Coke's death produced a sensation throughout the Methodist Connexion bordering on alarm. The whole body had strained itself for a great religious aggression on Asia, under his personal direction. We say great; for, although but a few men were sent, the enterprise was truly a great one, considering the pecuniary resources of Methodism at that time. When, therefore, the originator of the movement—he to whom its entire management had been confided—was removed by death, almost every heart feared, and every cheek waxed pale. But this disaster was the means of rousing the Methodist Connexion to unwonted exertion in this field of evangelical toil: the brightest and best of its ministers consecrated their talents to this holy cause. In December, 1814, the first Missionary Meeting for the London District was held in the chapel, City Road. It was numerously and respectably attended, and the effect of the numerous addresses was interesting and impressive. Dr. Clarke was called to the chair, and brought his antiquarian learning to bear on the subject with remarkable ability. He exhibited, in historical detail, the various information attainable re-

The effect produced by this intelligence in England.

specting the introduction of the Gospel into the British Islands; and, although this subject has been very largely investigated by the most eminent scholars during the forty years which have since elapsed, that address still continues to be a sound and valuable digest of most that is known on the subject. Ministers, old and young, at home and from abroad, contributed their talents to impress on that great meeting the Christian duty and importance of sending the Gospel of Christ to the heathen. Messrs. Wood, Benson, Entwisle, Jenkins, Bradburn, Gaulter, Edmondson, Sutcliffe, Buckley, M'Donald, and Joshua Marsden from British America and Bermuda, and Joseph Taylor, who had been a missionary in the West Indies, with several talented and influential laymen, addressed the assembly.

Similar meetings had been held in Manchester, Wakefield, Newcastle, and other important towns, and the remaining districts rapidly followed the example, until the whole Connexion was to some extent pervaded by a missionary spirit, and organized into missionary associations. This, however, was a work which called not only for the greatest activity, energy, and zeal, but equally so for profound wisdom, foresight, and judgment. That he might bring his great ability more effectively to bear on this part of the work, Mr. Jabez Bunting had been at the last Conference removed from Leeds to London. Before leaving the former town, he had concerted with a friend some literary plans which it seemed desirable and advantageous for him to carry into effect. But, located in the metropolis as secretary of the Conference, and seeing the claims of this great Mission work rising around him in every direction, there came over his mind serious doubt and concern, leading to anxious religious inquiry, and issuing in an irreversible judgment. He accordingly wrote to the

Mr. Bunting's devotion to the cause of Missions.

friend who had been a party to his literary projects, thus: "The die is cast. If I give to our Missions the attention they require, I shall not have any time hereafter for literature." There are men who will pass by the record of such a fact without notice or concern. Yet who can tell how much is really involved in this single decision? Who can tell what that gifted and energetic mind would have produced, had it, with all its powers, been devoted to literary pursuits? Who can tell what amount of fame and fortune was voluntarily relinquished, when Jabez Bunting determined to be known to posterity as the author only of two or three sermons, that he might devote the best energies of his soul to the great work of organizing means for sending the Gospel to the heathen? We can form no idea of the personal and family sacrifice which was then made; but we can form some conception of the importance of the consecrated gift thus placed on the altar of God, as we trace the rapid, steady, and religious progress of the Missionary Societies.

Its importance.

During this year one of the few from the highest ranks of society who have derived benefit and blessing from connexion with Methodism, was removed from a course of earthly honour to a throne of heavenly glory. This was Lady Mary Fitzgerald, daughter of John Lord Hervey, and grand-daughter of John Earl of Bristol. Moving in the first circles of society, and for some time an attendant at Court as lady of the bedchamber to the Princess Amelia Sophia, she discovered the utter insufficiency of earthly things to afford happiness to the soul, and was accordingly, when about forty years of age, led to seek substantial peace in the knowledge of Christ. She found this pearl of great price. Having realized the pardoning mercy of God, she became a member of the Methodist Society, and took her

Death of Lady Mary Fitzgerald.

share of "the reproach of Christ." A candid and pious clergyman, who gave some account of this excellent lady in preaching her funeral sermon, speaks of her thus: "She joined herself to the company of the most excellent Christians of whom she could hear, and became a companion of 'all them that fear God and keep His righteous judgments.' She 'walked in newness of life,' from 'newness of spirit:' and while the superficial might suppose that to one of her previous character but little change was necessary, 'old things indeed passed away, all things became new!' A new creed, a new circle of acquaintance, and attendance on places of worship of a new description, constituted but a very small part of the outward change. The employment of her whole time and of her wealth, her conduct and converse, in all the relations of life, and towards persons of all ranks and characters, was totally altered. As far as her situation in the attendance of a princess would permit, (and this was only for a time, and occasionally,) everything splendid or expensive was wholly renounced; all the pomp and decorations attached to her rank were given up; and a style of plainness and simplicity adopted in all particulars far beyond what is usual among inferior professors of the same holy truths; indeed, even more than in most instances would be desirable: but in her case the entire consistency of conduct prevented all possibility of misconception."* "I have known this lady," says another writer, "for above twenty years, and never saw her superior in humility, charity, and entire devotedness to God. Her piety was a living principle always in action, extending its influence to the most minute ramifications of duty."

This excellent lady continued a member of the Methodist Society to the end of her life, and died in holy triumph

* "Methodist Magazine," 1815, p. 525.

when nearly ninety years old. In conformity with a clause in her will, she was interred in the burial-ground of the chapel, City Road, and a marble tablet was erected to her memory in the south-east corner of the chapel by her grandson, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas George Fitzgerald.

And of Mr. Michael Longridge.

This year also removed Mr. Michael Longridge, of Sunderland, to the church triumphant. He was converted to God and joined the Methodist Society in early life; and, about five years afterward, when twenty-two years of age, became a leader and local preacher, which offices he continued to hold until his death. Possessing deep piety and more than ordinary energy of mind, Mr. Longridge felt a deep interest in everything relating to the state and progress of the Connexion. In particular, he took an active part in the discussions which preceded the settlement of 1797. And when Mr. Kilham commenced his course of agitation, he and Mr. Longridge had some correspondence; but if the former hoped to secure the latter as a follower, he was mistaken: Mr. Longridge remained firmly attached to the Methodist body to the end of his life.

Although not inattentive to his other duties, Mr. Longridge devoted his principal attention to the religious culture of the young. "His whole soul entered into the business of the rising generation. For that he thought; for that he wrote; for that he laboured with every power of body and soul; and there are thousands of the children in this town (Sunderland) and county who already call him blessed; many of whom, I doubt not, will meet him in glory. The example which he set stimulated others to exertion. To him they applied for direction and advice; and, if at any time they were ready to faint in their work, from him they were always sure to meet with encourage-

ment." * Mr. Longridge died full of faith and love, April 17th, 1815, in his forty-eighth year.

Nor was the aggressive power of the Gospel in the awakening and conversion of the most hardened and depraved sinners lost to the Methodist Connexion. While its aged saints were passing away to their glorious reward, others were being translated from the kingdom of Satan into that of the Son of God. This was fully manifested at this time, in the conversion of John Riddle, a shipwright of Workington. He was a native of the north of Ireland, bred a hosier, had been to the West Indies as a sailor, afterward learned the trade of a shipwright, and was a notoriously wicked man. In the last lovefeast which he attended, he "acknowledged that he had been a *cock-fighter*, a *Sabbath-breaker*, a *profane swearer*, a *drunkard*, &c.; that when inflamed by spirituous liquors, enraged with anger, or stung with remorse, he was the dread and tyrant of his family, and would often wreak his vengeance in the destruction of his household furniture."

Conversion of John Riddle.

We notice this case particularly, because this hardened transgressor was not brought to a sense of his sin and danger under any special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, nor through the influence of a preached Gospel, but by the persevering pious reproof and advice of a godly fellow-labourer. This Christian man was a Methodist, and frequently rebuked the profaneness of his companion with Christian firmness, mingled with meekness and love. Although Riddle remained for many years proof against all counsel, he was at length constrained to acknowledge that he felt the force of the word so powerfully, that, in his own language, "his blood ran chill to the end of his toes." This encouraged his pious friend to persevere, until, at

* Mr. George Marsden, in "Methodist Magazine," 1815, p. 567.

length, he was persuaded to attend a prayer-meeting, and there felt such contrition of soul as caused him to water the floor on which he knelt with his tears. He was soon afterward enabled to "cast his guilty soul upon the all-sufficient atonement and righteousness of Christ; and, in consequence, was filled with joy and peace in believing."

After his conversion he became as devoted and zealous in the service of God, as he had formerly been in the ways of sin; so that all who were acquainted with him were constrained to acknowledge the mighty change which grace had wrought in his heart. Nor was his conduct in his family less remarkably altered. Having many children, the scarcity of labour and the fluctuation of wages sometimes subjected him to severe privation. But all this was endured with Christian fortitude and resignation; and after excessive toil, he would return to his home, and partake of the meanest and most stinted fare with gratitude of heart and thankfulness to the Lord.*

Methodist soldiers at Waterloo.

The history of Methodism during the year which gave peace to Europe through the battle of Waterloo, would not be complete without mention of the conduct of some of the members of Society who were engaged in that sanguinary fight. A letter from a colour-sergeant in the First Foot Guards, a member of the Methodist Society at Westminster, which was printed in the "Methodist Magazine," † gives a thrilling account of this desperate struggle, and affords abundant evidence that the men who fear God and do His will are the bravest and best defenders of their country's interests and honour. This brave soldier—when, in the crisis of the battle, his officers and comrades were falling so fast from the murderous fire to which they were exposed, that the line was ren-

* "Methodist Magazine," 1821, p. 673. † *Idem*, 1816, p. 299.

dered unsteady by the rapid succession of these casualties —took the bloody coat of a fallen officer, and, placing it on the point of his halberd, advanced with it twenty paces in front of the line, cheering the men, and telling them that, while their officers bled, they should not reckon their lives dear. One most remarkable case is on record of a poor soldier who had heard the Gospel faithfully preached in Ireland, but had never fully given himself to God, until, in the midst of the toil and dangers of that bloody day, as he lifted his heart in earnest prayer, what he had previously heard was brought with saving power to his soul, and he was enabled to rejoice in God's pardoning mercy. A conversion amid the struggles, slaughter, and blood of Waterloo!

Richard Watson at Hull.

The Conference of 1814 removed Richard Watson from Wakefield to Hull. Jonathan Barker was superintendent, and his other colleagues were H. S. Hopwood and John Scott. There had previously been three Methodist chapels in the town, and this year was distinguished by the erection of a fourth, a larger and more elegant structure than either of the preceding, in Waltham Street. It was opened for Divine service on Friday and Sunday, October 7th and 9th; the officiating ministers being Messrs. Bunting, Watson, Newton, and Burdsall. Many of the friends of Methodism in Hull thought this an unseasonable effort, and felt strongly that the erection was premature, and would prove a failure. They were, however, disappointed. The result proved that the zealous projectors of this important movement had not only accurately calculated on their resources, but had truly appreciated the religious demand for this increased accommodation. "To this result," however, a high authority says, "the ministry of Mr. Watson mainly contributed; many

families, previously unacquainted with Methodism, principally through his instrumentality were permanently attached to this place of worship." Indeed, at no period of his life does his preaching appear to greater advantage than when regarded in connexion with its fruits in Hull. "His sermons," says his biographer, "were marked by a force of reasoning and a persuasiveness almost peculiar to himself: embodying the great and vital truths of Christianity, and delivered with earnestness and pathos, they were the means of reclaiming many a wanderer from God, of conveying strength and comfort to many a broken heart, and of stimulating believers to 'go on unto perfection.'" *

It may to some persons present a curious inquiry, how the refined, elevated, philosophical, although truly sanctified, mind of Richard Watson would lead him to act, if brought within the range of the excitement attending a Methodist revival. This question is solved by circumstances which occurred while he was stationed at Hull. One Monday evening, when he was preaching in Waltham Street chapel, an unusual power attended the word, and several persons wept aloud. At the close of the public service he retired into the vestry, where many of the congregation followed him, inquiring, "What must we do to be saved?" The cries of those who were convinced of sin were loud and piercing. For a while he seemed to be stunned, and asked one of the class-leaders who was standing by, "What shall we do, brother?" "Let us pray to Him who can save," was the answer. Without uttering another word, he kneeled by the side of the penitents, and continued to intercede with God on their behalf, pointing them at intervals to the sacrifice of Christ, and encouraging them to put their trust in Him, till three of them obtained the inward witness

* JACKSON'S "Life of Watson," p. 170.

of their acceptance in the Beloved, and were enabled to rejoice in the pardoning mercy of God. Like men of meaner powers, he felt the presence of God's Spirit, saw incontestable proofs of the working of the Holy One, and, gladly confessing the Lord, pointed sinners to the source of all spiritual life, and rejoiced to see them look on Him and live.

The Conference of 1815.

The Conference of 1815 was held in Manchester, and began July 31st. John Barber was president for the second time, and Jabez Bunting secretary. The number of Circuits now registered was 354, an increase of 13 on the year. The following changes were made:—Harwich, Oakhampton, St. David's, and Newtownlimavady were no longer reckoned as Circuits; while Windsor, High Wycombe, Manningtree, Staplecross, Holt, Scilly Islands, Tiverton, Stickelpath, Cowbridge, Broseley, Whitchurch, Worksop, Sleaford, Brigg, Stockton, and Morpeth were numbered as Circuits, and Shields was divided, the new Circuits being called North and South Shields. The list of Missions was considerably extended, containing nine stations in Ireland, and forty-three in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and the West Indies. The number of members in the Societies in the British Islands was 211,063, being an increase of 7,855. On the several Missions there were at this time 19,885 members, being an increase on the number of last year of 1,138.

Its transactions.

The president, Mr. John Barber, was appointed to preside over the ensuing Irish Conference; or, if unable, authorized to appoint a substitute. The Committee of Privileges was re-appointed. Collections were ordered to be made, limited as usual, on behalf of 119 chapels. Minutes were made for the purpose of restoring the singing in Methodist chapels to the style recommended by Wesley,

for regulating the manner of administering the Lord's Supper, and for enjoining a suitable mode of conducting public worship, when it was celebrated in Methodist chapels during church hours. Directions were given to the chairmen of Districts, as to the examination of young men on trial for the ministry, with a view to promote their intellectual improvement. Further modifications were made in the rules of the Preachers' Auxiliary Fund.

Formation of a mixed Missionary Committee.

The removal of Dr. Coke, general superintendent of the Missions, brought that branch of the work under the careful consideration of the Conference. This resulted in a series of resolutions, prescribing the manner in which efficient oversight might be given to the Missions between the sittings of Conference. The principal new feature of this plan was the appointment of an executive Committee, consisting of an equal number of preachers and laymen. These were to form a Committee of examination and finance for the current year. The successful progress which had been made in the formation of Missionary Societies in different parts of the Connexion, and the spirit of liberality which had been so generally evinced, encouraged the Conference to make a large addition to the number of missionaries previously employed. It was accordingly decided to send four additional missionaries to the West Indies, four to the British provinces of North America, two to Newfoundland, and six to Ceylon and the East.

July Collection instituted.

It was also determined to drop the terms *Home Missions* and *Home Missionaries*, and either to make the several stations separate Circuits, or to attach them to existing Circuits; and for the purpose of enabling the Contingent Fund to afford the necessary aid for the extension of the Gospel into destitute parts of the country,

in connexion with existing Circuit arrangements, it was agreed to establish a new collection, to be made in all the chapels in the month of July, the proceeds of which were ordered to be brought to the ensuing Conference, and added to the amount provided by the Yearly Collection. This was the origin of the July Collection. The times for making the several connexional collections and subscriptions were clearly stated, and earnest directions and exhortations given to limit the amount of expenses in various ways. Committees for Kingswood and Woodhouse Grove Schools were re-appointed. To these minutes were appended Miscellaneous Orders and Regulations.

No intelligent person, acquainted with the Minutes of former years, can carefully consider those now before us without being struck with the marked superiority which they exhibit. The arrangement, order, and statesmanlike bearing of the whole are distinctly perceptible. If destitute of any information as to the origin of this change, we should from internal evidence alone venture to say that the pen of the Conference scribe had at length fallen into the hand of a master, and that a mind of more than ordinary talent had been at work on this portion of connexional legislation. This is undoubtedly very apparent, although Jabez Bunting was now secretary of the Conference only for the second time.

Death of Benjamin Rhodes and Richard Rodda.

Within a month or two after the close of this Conference, two old preachers, who had borne the burden in the heat of the day, were taken to their reward,—Benjamin Rhodes and Richard Rodda. The former of these venerable men was brought to the knowledge of Christ when a child. Being called to the work of the ministry, he was not unfaithful, but willingly devoted his powers of body and mind to the service of his Saviour. For fifty years he

was employed in calling sinners to repentance, and strengthening believers in the faith. He was a man of great simplicity and integrity, highly approved by his brethren, and warmly attached to the whole economy of Methodism. In his last illness he often said, "What a blessing it is to be prepared for death! When I sleep, I sleep in the arms of Jesus. Whether I live or die, I shall be happy." Thus he died, aged seventy-two. Richard Rodda had also served the Lord from his youth, and early in life was made a happy witness of pardoning mercy. Called of God to the work of the ministry, he laboured diligently and successfully in that sacred vocation. He continued to discharge the full duties of an itinerant preacher from 1770 till 1802, during which period he was much respected and esteemed for his talents, zeal, and usefulness. In his last illness, he would say to his friends, "Do not pray for my stay. I long to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." He died in the full triumph of faith, aged seventy-two years.

Death of Mrs. Fletcher.

On the 9th of December, 1815, Mrs. Fletcher also exchanged mortality for life, at Madeley, being about seventy-six years of age. Her life, during a widowhood of thirty years, was a suitable sequel to her preceding course of holy living and holy action. Exulting in the salvation of God, her whole language was a song of praise. For a long time before her death, the number of persons in her Classes ranged from seventy to a hundred. Their spiritual interests she fostered, and over them she watched like a mother in Israel. A day or two before her death, she said to her friends, "I am drawing near to glory;" and in this frame of mind she closed her earthly career, and sweetly fell asleep in Jesus.

Turning away from the departure of sanctified age to the

home of heaven, we have to contemplate the consecration of youthful talent to the service of the Lord's sanctuary. In the early part of 1812 there lived at Humberstone, in the Grimsby Circuit, in Lincolnshire, a zealous and respectable Methodist named Tomlinson. His name is worthy of being placed on record. He had often pressed the importance of spiritual religion on the attention of an inhabitant of the neighbouring village of Waltham, as they casually met on horseback. This person was taken ill, and Mr. Tomlinson visited and prayed with him, and his instructions were now gladly received, and the result was that the sick man was soon savingly converted to God. He had a son called John, a clever, thoughtful lad, who for his studious habits and serious disposition was a great favourite with the respectable inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and was, at the time of his father's illness, studying under the direction of a clergyman at Irby, with a view to become a minister of the Church of England. But John took a deep interest in the communications made by Mr. Tomlinson to his father, joined with them in prayer, found peace with God, and became a happy and earnest follower of Christ.

Conversion of Mr. Beecham.

Soon after his conversion, John began to exhort and preach; and at the meetings which he held, other persons in the village sought and obtained the enjoyment of religion, one of whom, after a lapse of years, became his wife. He also introduced Methodism into the village of Ashby, where a Society was formed in 1813. The father died, but the son pursued his course, and it was no exception to the general rule. Through ignorance, or enmity to the truth, persecution was excited; he was treated with great violence by the mob; but he continued faithful to the Saviour whose grace he had experienced, and rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer for His

name's sake. This open violence, however, was a small portion of the opposition he had to bear. His connexion with the Methodists, and his conducting prayer-meetings, and preaching in the villages, completely alienated him from the friendship of those by whom he had been patronized, and who had promoted his preparing to enter the Established Church: all their friendly aid was entirely withdrawn. But this did not divert him from his course of conscientious duty. He went into business to provide for his support, still prosecuted his classical and theological studies, and diligently laboured to be instrumental in the salvation of his neighbours. This fidelity to his convictions of duty marked him out as a fit person to occupy a more extended sphere of usefulness in the ministry. Accordingly at the Conference of this year, he was received on trial among the Methodist preachers. This was Mr. John, afterward Dr., Beecham, who zealously served the Connexion as one of the missionary secretaries, and was, in 1850, president of the Conference.*

Our space just permits us to give these few proofs that the Methodism of this period retained its vitality and spiritual power, in conducting hoary saints and penitent believers through a triumphant or peaceful death to a blissful immortality; and in leading young and ardent minds to perceive the evil of sin, and the insufficiency of earthly good to confer happiness, and thus inducing them to fly for refuge to the only sure hope, even Christ, for salvation. Having done so, we proceed to exhibit more fully the grand characteristic of this period of Methodist history, which unquestionably was missionary development. We shall, perhaps, do this most effectively by giving some information

* See Dr. Hoole's Memoir of him, in the "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine," 1856, p. 578.

respecting the encouraging reports received about this time from the foreign fields of labour, and showing the stimulating influence which these had on the exertions, contributions, and policy of the Connexion at large for the support and extension of the kingdom of Christ.

Progress of the missionaries in the East.

In the first instance our attention is naturally turned to the East, which the noble enterprise and lamented death of Dr. Coke had invested with great importance. From this quarter the most encouraging intelligence had been received. Mr. Money having consented to accept the bills of the missionaries, as already stated, they were relieved from their pecuniary embarrassment, and furnished with the means of prosecuting their missionary work. Preparations were accordingly made for their removal to Ceylon, which was destined to be the seat of their first exertions. The state of Mrs. Harvard's health not permitting her to remove from Bombay immediately, Mr. Harvard obtained leave to remain with his wife for some time, while all the other missionaries proceeded to Ceylon.

Their favourable reception in Ceylon.

They were received there with the greatest kindness and respect. Sir Robert Brownrigg, who had been apprised of their coming, ordered the Government house at Point de Galle to be prepared for their reception; and Lord Molesworth and his lady manifested toward them a kindness and courtesy truly Christian. His lordship was commandant of the garrison there, and, knowing that boats were gone off to bring the missionaries on shore, waited for them on the jetty; and when Mr. Squance, who was the first to step out of the boat, landed, Lord Molesworth took him by the hand, asked his name, and, finding it to be that of one of the expected missionaries, said, "Yes, you are the man;" and added with great emotion, "All this is in answer to prayer. I have long been praying that missionaries might

be sent to India, and the Lord has answered." One of the governor's servants at Point de Galle had orders from his Excellency to make every necessary provision for the missionaries at his expense; but for several days after their landing they took their principal meals at Lord Molesworth's table.

First Sabbath services.

The first Sabbath was a memorable day. The Dutch church was placed at their disposal, and Divine service was conducted in that sanctuary. We are glad to be able to give an authentic account of this service and its results, by the kindness of the only survivor of this band of missionaries. On that occasion most of the English residents attended, and a goodly number of Dutch and Portuguese, who had some knowledge of the English language. By the command of Lord Molesworth, the soldiers also were marched to the church, altogether forming a numerous and most interesting congregation. The service was conducted after the manner of the Church of England; Mr. Lynch read the Liturgy, and Mr. Squance preached from 2 Cor. x. 14: "For we are come as far as unto you also in preaching the Gospel of Christ." God was pleased to accompany His word by a special Divine influence, so that under this first discourse Lord Molesworth, and a native of European origin, (J. Lalmon,) were awakened to an intense desire for salvation. They both sought in penitence and faith, and they both obtained, the knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins. The case of Lord Molesworth is one of deep and thrilling interest. A party had been invited to dine at his lordship's house; but the services of the forenoon had utterly disqualified him for all enjoyment in worldly society; and he therefore stole away from his company late in the evening, and came to the house where the missionaries were residing. They were holding

Conversion and affecting account of Lord Molesworth.

a prayer-meeting among themselves. His lordship on entering said, "Gentlemen, the company now at my house is very uncongenial to my present state of feeling, and I am come to request that you will, if you please, spend a little time with me in prayer." The missionaries resumed their prayer-meeting, and in a little while his lordship obtained a clear witness of his adoption. He instantly exclaimed, "Do, brethren, let me praise God with you too;" and then he poured forth his soul to God in strains of the most fervid devotion, and in the language of ardent gratitude and praise; and in conclusion he exclaimed, "This has been the best day of my life." From this time he was in the habit of calling on one of the missionaries every day to accompany him in his morning rides, for the purpose of conversation on religious subjects. On one of these occasions he remarked to Mr. Squance, "My mind has of late been greatly agitated in reference to one of the disputed points of religion;" to which the missionary replied, "O, my lord, we do not come to this country to agitate the minds of our converts with any of the disputed points of religion. We wish to merge all our minor points of difference in those great essentials in which we are happily united." "But I must," said his Lordship, "have my mind relieved on this subject: it is the doctrine of final perseverance." The missionary, not deeming it advisable to enter into controversy, simply replied, "O, my lord, we can soon set your mind to rest on this subject: the way to persevere to the end is, now to get the Spirit to bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God, to go on the next moment to enjoy the same delightful consciousness, to attain the experience of the apostle, and with him to say, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life

which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.'" The big tear started into his lordship's eye, and with a glow of holy delight he exclaimed, "That is the right way, that is the most effectual way." From this time he exemplified the power of Christian principle, and adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things. Shortly afterward he left India; but, by a mysterious dispensation of Providence, the ship in which he sailed (the "Arniston" transport) was wrecked near Cape Laguellas, on the coast of South Africa, and all, with the exception of two or three, found a watery grave. The survivors stated that, while the ship was sinking, Lord Molesworth was actively employed in walking up and down her decks, pointing the dying seamen, soldiers, and passengers to "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Having finished his work of mercy, he embraced Lady Molesworth, and they sank locked in each other's arms, and thus, folded together in death, they were washed on shore. Thus in his lordship's experience was realized the wish so often expressed:—

> "Happy, if with my latest breath
> I may but gasp His name;
> Preach Him to all, and cry in death,
> 'Behold, behold the Lamb!'"

Conversion of Mr. Lalmon.

When the missionaries repaired to their several spheres of labour, the other convert, Mr. Lalmon, was left under the pastoral oversight of Mr. Clough, and made rapid progress in religious knowledge and Christian holiness. After giving full proof of a Divine call, he was set apart to the work of the Christian ministry, and he has continued to this day to be a faithful and successful evangelist to his own countrymen. Thus did God encourage His servants

at the very commencement of their labours, by showing how admirably the Gospel is suited to meet the circumstances of different classes of society, and of different grades of intellect; that it is, indeed, of universal adaptation.*

Thankful as they were for this encouragement, the missionaries had yet to secure the great object for which all their preliminary voyaging and labours had been undertaken. They had to enter on their proper work of preaching the Gospel to the heathen; and the best plan that could be devised even for their location for this purpose, presented very serious difficulties. It was, of course, apparent, that they must separate from each other; and this, in itself, was a severe trial. Then they had no head to decide for them how this was to be done, and to appoint each to his proper station. Again, as in one part of the island Tamul was spoken, and in the other Cingalese, the appointments to be now made would, to a certain extent, be final; any interchange afterward involving the necessity of acquiring a language. In this difficulty they remembered Him in whose service they were engaged, and who had promised them His continual presence. They sought the guidance and blessing of the great Head of the church by earnest prayer; and then, having carefully considered the difficulties and requirements of the several parts of the field of labour before them, proceeded to station each man to his sphere of action by ballot. The result of this measure was in the following appointments:—Jaffna, James Lynch and T. H. Squance; Batticaloa, William Ault; Matura, George Erskine; Point de Galle, Benjamin Clough. Mr. Harvard, in narrating these circumstances, observes: "We felt truly resigned to our appointments;

Arrangements for the establishment of the Mission.

* Communicated by the Rev. T. H. Squance.

not a murmuring word, nor, we believe, a thought of the kind existed. At this instant our feelings were most acute. We found ourselves at last about to separate to various and distant parts of the island. We embraced, and wept, and prayed for each other. God had given us the spirit of love in an unusual degree." *

It is favoured by the colonial authorities.

The great importance of this missionary enterprise is apparent from the ardent good-will with which the missionaries were received, and their object promoted, by those in power, who had no knowledge of Methodism, and no interest in promoting its extension. Soon after their arrival in Ceylon, General Sir Robert Brownrigg, G.C.B., the governor, to whom they had been strongly recommended by Sir Evan Nepean, the governor of Bombay, sent his brother-in-law, the Rev. George Bisset, one of the colonial chaplains, from Colombo, the seat of government, to Point de Galle, to bid the missionaries welcome to the island, and to procure for the governor information as to the plan of operations on which they intended to proceed. They gladly met this kind overture, by furnishing every information in their power, and explaining that their immediate object in Ceylon was to commence the study of the native languages, in order to qualify themselves for labouring among the Ceylonese; and that, previously to their acquiring a sufficient knowledge of the native languages, they would avail themselves of every opportunity of teaching and preaching to such as might be disposed to hear them in English. Mr. Bisset expressed himself as fully satisfied with their proposed course, and assured them that they might expect every encouragement in so good a work. A few days afterward the missionaries had another most interesting interview with Mr. Bisset, in the

* HARVARD'S "Narrative of the Mission to Ceylon and India," p. 155.

course of which he stated to them, that the governor, with himself and others of our respected countrymen at the seat of government, not having any knowledge of our funds, and of the way in which the Mission was to be supported, had consulted as to their having any means of assisting it, in case it should be needful. The only way in which this could be done, seemed to be by the colonial government offering each missionary a certain stipend for teaching the English language to the children of the principal native inhabitants in a few of the most important towns. This, it was suggested, would not only aid the funds of the Mission, but most effectually subserve its design, by introducing the missionaries to an acquaintance with the most respectable natives, procuring for them considerable influence, and at the same time affording them the best opportunity of becoming acquainted with the native languages. After careful consideration, this plan was cordially received. Indeed, it appeared "to recommend itself by so many advantages, that they could regard it in no other point of view, than as an intimation from Providence of the path which had been chosen for them."

It will be observed that the missionaries sought neither this official countenance, nor the pecuniary aid of government. Both were generously and spontaneously tendered, as means of fostering an effort to introduce Christianity to the native population, which all admitted was exceedingly desirable. And the result abundantly met every reasonable hope which had been formed. The missionaries entered on their work, and were in the course of the year reinforced by six additional men; which enabled them to provide for the most important stations in Ceylon, and to send one missionary to Bombay, and another to Madras, to initiate Wesleyan Missions on the continent of India. It will be

sufficient here to say that these labours were, by the blessing of God, crowned with a measure of success fully equal to the means which were employed.

Prosperity of Missions in the West Indies and America.

While the newly formed Mission to the East was presenting the most favourable and promising appearances, the old established Missions in other parts of the world, and especially in the West Indies and America, were prospering beyond all preceding example. In Jamaica, where the principal chapels, those of Morant Bay and Kingston, had been shut up, with few and brief intermissions, for ten years, by the intolerance of the local government, they were allowed to be re-opened for Divine worship about the end of 1815; and, in the following May, leave was given to Mr. Shipman to take the oaths, and receive a licence to preach. This missionary arrived on the island in January, 1815, and was not allowed to exercise his ministry until May, 1816. The joy of the poor persecuted Society at being allowed to worship God again in their own sanctuary, is thus described by a missionary on the spot: "The people, with joy sparkling in their eyes, and feelings of gratitude visibly portrayed on their countenances, came up *once more* to the house of the Lord. But certain I am, that few of our friends in England can have any conception of the joy this merciful and happy circumstance diffused, because none have been prevented from worshipping God for eight or ten years, either by national or municipal laws; and, I may add, we only appreciate our privileges by a privation of them." The cheering prospect which the opening of the chapels and the licensing of the missionary gave to the Mission, is thus described by the same pen: "We are now going on more comfortably, and have every reason to believe that the Lord is carrying on a good work. Many in Kingston appear to be growing in grace, and our num-

Jamaica.

bers are daily increasing. New openings might be made with advantage in the country. We have lately had invitations to two large estates; and we hope that the Lord will soon open before us such a door, that we shall be able (as far as our contracted means will allow us) to make known unto the people what is the exceeding riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus." *

Antigua.

In Antigua, the Mission cause steadily held on its way. Many respectable white people attended preaching, and some twenty were members of Society. But the great body of the Society was composed of black and coloured persons, who gladly received the word of life. Their previous state of ignorance, and the peculiar trials to which a state of slavery exposed them, caused the walk of many to be irregular, and required very vigilant oversight on the part of the missionaries; and this was not withheld, but discipline was administered with godly fidelity. Notwithstanding, the Societies continued to increase in the number of members. Mr. Coultas writes thus, from Parham in this island, in January, 1816: "The first quarter I was here, we expelled 66 for different offences. After that, we had 783 left. Since that time, 30 have died; and we have expelled, for various crimes, 153. But, after deducting this 183, we have 953 in Society, giving a clear increase of 170."

St. Kitt's, Tortola, St. Vincent's, Nevis, and other islands.

St. Kitt's, Tortola, St. Vincent's, Nevis, and other islands, presented similar signs of spiritual prosperity. Instability of character was prevalent; continual instruction and vigilance were required on the part of the ministers; but where missionaries were provided in such numbers as to render this oversight possible, the progress of the work of God was very considerable. Unfortunately a minister would occasionally fall, by premature death, and much loss would

* Mr. Shipman's letter in the "Methodist Magazine," 1816, p. 874.

in consequence be sustained before his place could be supplied. Mr. Dace, writing from St. Vincent's, January, 1816, says, "The peace and prosperity with which the great Head of the church has favoured us, encourage us in the midst of all our difficulties which we are called to encounter. We have large and respectable congregations, and our Society is increasing." * And Mr. Mortier, from Nevis, April 16th, 1816, observes, "In this place, once stones and dirt were thrown at us in profusion; but now a spirit of hearing has succeeded that of opposition. The members of our Society are a loving people. The devil's kingdom has had a firm basis in this place for a long time; but it seems to be giving way at length to the powerful efficacy of the Gospel of the Son of God. Our chapel was never so well attended as it is at present." † Everywhere throughout these islands there was an earnest desire for an increased number of missionaries. Appeals for help, in the multiplication of ministers, were sent home in great numbers, and in almost every conceivable variety of form.

British America.

This was also the case throughout the several Circuits in Nova Scotia. The official communication from the District Meeting of that province, July 16th, 1816, states, "We feel ourselves peculiarly happy in informing you, that the prospect of good in this District is truly great, and of course truly pleasing; and we are each of us departing to our respective Circuits with the cheering prospect of better days. We have had various petitions from various parts of the provinces for additional preachers; but we have left those places open only where the call is most pressing, and where we think it would be cruel to

* "Methodist Magazine," 1816, p. 473. † *Ibid.*, p. 956.

deny them, if the financial state of the Society at home would allow of their being sent."

Methodism in the United States.

The magnitude of the work under the direct charge of the British and Irish Conferences has led us hitherto to abstain from any mention of the progress of Methodism in the United States of America. Nor can we now do more than present a rapid summary of the public ecclesiastical action of this part of the Methodist family, which, indeed, during the period under consideration, made more rapid progress than any religious body of which we have any knowledge. The work had increased so greatly before the death of Wesley, that the preachers could not travel far enough to meet in one General Conference; and this led to the formation of District Conferences in various parts of the country. In 1791, thirteen of these assemblies were held. But, as no one of these possessed authority over the whole body, it became necessary to call into existence some body having this supreme authority. For this purpose Bishop Asbury proposed the appointment of a Council, to be composed of bishops and "presiding elders;" (as the chairmen of Districts were called;) and, after some debate, this advice was followed, and the Council formed. But, after meeting two sessions, it did not give satisfaction, and a General Conference, open to all the preachers in full Connexion, was held in Baltimore, November, 1792. At this Conference, several important alterations in the economy of Methodism were proposed. One of these, put forth by James O'Kelly, aimed at limiting the power of the bishops in stationing the preachers. This being rejected by a large majority of the preachers present, O'Kelly seceded from the Connexion, and induced several preachers, and many of the people, to go with him; so that he was

able to organize a distinct body under the title of "the Republican Methodists." It, however, failed to maintain a separate existence; and, after a while, merged into other denominations. At this Conference the office of presiding elder was formally established. Previously these had been appointed by the bishops on their own authority; and the authority to make such appointments was now confirmed by the Conference. Other important rules were enacted, and another General Conference was appointed to be held at the end of four years.

Continued prosperity of Methodism in America.

Although still persecuted in some places, Methodism continued to prosper; until, in 1796, a Circuit having been formed in Vermont, it was introduced into every State of the Union. At the General Conference of 1796, it was resolved, that "the District Conferences, which had previously reached the number of twenty, but had been gradually reduced, should be but six in the ensuing year." At the General Conference of 1800, Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury presided; and, as this Conference *lent* the doctor to the brethren in England, as already stated, Richard Whatcoat, who accompanied him on his first visit to America, was elected and ordained a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. About this time, camp-meetings first began to be held. "They originated among the Presbyterians and Methodists, under the labours of two brothers, by the name of M'Gee, one being a Presbyterian minister, and the other a Methodist minister." At some of these meetings, especially at the beginning, the power of God was eminently present. Afterwards, such crowds came together, that great irregularity was produced. In 1804, the General Conference was held in Baltimore, and presided over by Bishops Coke, Asbury, and Whatcoat. One of the most important acts of this assembly was the

establishment of the Methodist Book Concern in New York. At this Conference, also, the bounds of the several yearly Conferences were defined, and printed in the Book of Discipline.

The fifth General Conference was held in Baltimore, in 1808; Bishop Asbury alone presiding. Dr. Coke was in England, and Bishop Whatcoat had died two years before. William M'Kendree was at this time elected and ordained a bishop. Provision was now made for giving the General Conference in future a representative character; each Annual Conference being at liberty to send one out of every five of its members. It was also decided that the General Conference should meet on the 1st of May in every fourth year. The bishops were also authorized to organize another Annual Conference, in addition to the seven previously existing, should they think fit. Accordingly that of Genesee was formed in 1811, including the whole of western and central New York and Upper Canada.

The first delegated Conference assembled in 1812. Some important regulations were made respecting local preachers; measures were taken for raising money for missionary purposes; and the publication of a monthly Methodist periodical was resolved on. The war with England, which broke out almost immediately afterward, severed the Societies in Canada from the newly formed Conference of Genesee. In 1813, another secession took place under the name of "the Reformed Methodist Church." The principal instrument of this division was Pliny Brett, who had been an itinerant minister, but subsequently located, and effected this schism principally by the means of local preachers. At first, the rent was extensive, and the new body promised to be permanent; but,

after a while, it merged into other bodies, and ceased to have a separate existence.

Secession of coloured people from the United States Methodists.

In the year 1815, a formal secession of a number of coloured people from the Methodist body took place. From the beginning the Methodists paid a kind attention to Negro and coloured people, who abounded in the Free States; and many of them were brought to the knowledge of salvation. But, unhappily, the inferiority and degradation with which these people were regarded in civil society were imported into the church, so that they were frequently treated in the house of God, and whilst engaged in worship, in a manner which led them to believe that they were regarded by their white brethren as a nuisance.* This conduct led many of the coloured members of Society in Philadelphia to meet for the purpose of considering the evils under which they laboured, as early as 1787. In the following years it was proposed to erect a separate place of worship for their use; and this purpose was carried into effect. This measure, however, did not lead to an immediate separation. Bishop Asbury opened this place of worship, and a nominal union was preserved for some time. But as the grievance which first produced discontent among the coloured people continued, so the alienation of many of them increased, until, at this time, one of their preachers was ordained by Bishop White, after the manner of the Church of England; and the seceders were organized into a separate body under the denomination of "the African Methodist Episcopal Church." "There were about one thousand persons who seceded; and, since that period, they have increased to some fifteen or twenty thousand members, having congregations and churches in

* Introduction to "The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church."

nearly all the cities and large towns of the Free States where the coloured people are numerous." *

Progress of Methodism during twenty-five years.

The following table shows the number of members in Society at the Conference of 1815, and the increase during the twenty-five years which had elapsed since the death of Wesley:—

			MEMBERS IN 1815.
Great Britain			181,706
Ireland			29,357
Missions:	France	25	
,,	Gibraltar	53	
,,	Sierra Leone	100	
,,	Cape of Good Hope	42	
,,	Ceylon	50	
,,	West Indies	17,856	
,,	Nova Scotia, &c.	1,759	
			19,885
Total number of members under the care of the British and Irish Conferences			230,948
Total number in the United States			211,129
Total number of members in the Methodist Societies throughout the world in the year 1815			442,077

	BRITISH ISLANDS.	MISSIONS.	UNITED STATES.
Total number of Methodists, 1790...	71,668	5,300	43,265
,, ,, 1815...	211,063	19,885	211,129
Increase in 25 years	139,395	14,585	167,864
Total number of Ministers, 1790	294	19	198
,, ,, 1815	868	74	687
Increase in 25 years	564	55	489

Who can behold these figures and not exclaim, as Wesley did, not long before his death, "What hath God wrought?" This progress is the more remarkable, considering the circumstances in which Methodism was placed

* GORRIE'S "Episcopal Methodism," p. 87.

at the death of its founder; the difficulties and oppositions through which it had afterwards to pass; and, indeed, the existence of many imperfections and defects which had not yet been remedied in the system. Yet, with all these retarding agencies in operation, Methodism steadily progressed. Strange as this may appear, it presents no marvel to our mind. In the purpose of Divine Providence Britain was evidently designed to exercise a potent and extensive influence on the religion of the world. Bibles, missionaries, and Gospel light were to proceed from the sea-girt home of the Anglo-Saxon race to the ends of the earth. And, this Divine purpose being recognised, men may say what they please of the irregularities or imperfections of Methodism; but, admitting all these allegations to be true, one thing is undeniable. Methodism proclaimed with a trumpet voice throughout the land, "Repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." It led men, by penitence and prayer, to a thorough experience of Gospel salvation. It was, therefore, a suitable instrument for the accomplishment of the purpose of God, and was accordingly used and honoured by Him as such, and was consequently favoured with blessing and prosperity.

BOOK VI.

THE METHODISM OF THE MIDDLE AGE.

CHAPTER I.

METHODIST REVIVALS.

IMPORTANCE of the Subject renders further Investigation necessary—Origin and Nature of Revivals—Special gracious Influence sometimes displayed in heathen Lands—Generally connected with the faithful preaching of Gospel Truth—Nature of a Revival—Parties who reject our Views on this Subject—Origin of Revivals—Promoted by human Instrumentality—Possibility of occasional Impropriety—Reasonableness of religious Excitement—Singular Phenomena presented in Revivals—The Allegation that Revivals are not permanently beneficial—Danger of Declension—The Case of Converts not adequately met—Nor suitable Addition made to the Number of Ministers—Notwithstanding this Neglect, Revivals have been beneficial—Great Advantages of them—Importance of correct Views and Conduct in regard of Revivals—They have wonderfully displayed the Presence and Power of God.

Importance of the subject renders further investigation necessary.

ALTHOUGH the preceding chapters contain as full an account of the Methodism of this period generally, as it appeared desirable to incorporate in a consecutive history, there are a few topics which seem to require further investigation and elucidation. One of these is that named at the head of this chapter. Those remarkable seasons of religious prosperity which are usually termed revivals, have attracted so much attention, and drawn forth such a variety of opinions, that we feel called upon to offer the

following exposition of their origin and nature, extraordinary phenomena, and blessed results.

Origin and nature of revivals

In attempting to discuss the origin and nature of religious revivals, we do not wish to affirm that everything pertaining to these wonderful manifestations of saving grace lies open to human inquiry, and is capable of being fully apprehended and satisfactorily explained. Nor, on the other hand, are we disposed to resolve these peculiar visitations into the inscrutable operations of the Divine sovereignty, which lie altogether beyond the range of human influence or action. A careful and extended inquiry into the subject has made it fully apparent, that the sudden and unaccountable displays of God's saving power, which do not seem to stand connected with any antecedent prayer or faith, and with which we sometimes meet in the history of the Church, are to be regarded as exceptions to the more usual and ordinary order, which is for the people of God to be first stirred up to increasing spirituality of mind; to give great diligence to secure a growth in grace; to be drawn out in earnest intercessory prayer for the salvation of their unconverted relations, friends, and neighbours; and thus to persevere, until the times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord.

Special gracious influence sometimes displayed in heathen lands.

To those, indeed, who are willing to recognise the abundant grace and power of God, as exercised for the benefit and blessing of mankind, sufficient evidence of His gracious interposition may be seen in the darkest times. Who that believes the explicit teaching of Scripture respecting the goodness and mercy of God, and the prevalent influence of His Holy Spirit, can read the results which followed the teaching of Pythagoras in Croton, without recognising the powerful operation of His saving

power to enlighten the minds and reform the lives even of heathens? *

But, whatever exceptions the history of past or present times may furnish, we only expect, as a general rule, to find those extraordinary displays of grace accompanying a clear, distinct, and faithful preaching of Gospel truth. We may even say more than this: we have seldom seen these signs follow any preaching in which the great practical truths bearing on human salvation—such as man's danger through the guilt of sin, the necessity of instant repentance, justification by faith alone in the atonement of Christ, the privilege and duty of personal holiness, and the like—have not been made exceedingly prominent. President Edwards, in his very useful account of the great revival in New England, says, "About this time I began to preach concerning 'justification by faith alone.' This was attended by a very remarkable blessing. The people, in general, were deeply concerned, and began earnestly to seek acceptance with God, and salvation in the way of the Gospel." † In speaking therefore of the origin of revivals, we direct particular attention to this essential point. It is not rant, nor senseless declamation, nor a profusion of terrific epithets, which is likely to produce a revival; but, on the contrary, a plain, earnest, forceful utterance of sterling Gospel truth, enforcing the necessity and holding forth the privilege of a present salvation from the guilt and power of sin. Some, indeed, have demurred to the application of the term "revival" to these seasons of awakening and conversion, because a revival means a renewal and invigora-

Generally connected with the faithful preaching of Gospel truth.

* See GROTE'S "History of Greece," vol. iv., pp. 543–546, and SMITH'S "Sacred Annals," vol. iii., p. 597.

† "Revivals of Religion, their Nature," &c., p. 2.

tion of life where it exists, whereas the persons generally affected at such times were previously dead in trespasses and sins. This objection seems to arise from a misapprehension of the real application of the term. We do not call the conversion of an individual a revival, nor, indeed, that of any number of individuals, as such. The term is applied to a society or community of persons; and, thus employed, recognises the fact of the previous existence of real religion among them, and indicates its rapid increase and extension.

Nature of a revival.

A revival, therefore, is a work of grace effected by the Spirit of God on the souls of the people; and, in its origin and nature, differs only from the ordinary operations of the Holy Ghost in the enlightening and conversion of men by its wider prevalence and greater intensity. We are very desirous to avoid giving offence to any person, but it is necessary to observe, that the existence of real spiritual religion, as understood and taught by evangelical Christians, is pre-supposed as believed, and in some measure experienced, by a people, when we speak of a revival. Those who regard Christianity as a refined moral philosophy, possessing no potent spiritual energy to renovate the heart or affect the conscience, or who repudiate and deny all conscious conversion,—together with those who maintain that there is no commencement of spiritual life in the heart of man, but that which is begun in baptism,—will of course unite to reject and oppose the views we advocate, and are very unlikely to be visited with the blessing we describe. Nor shall we endeavour to avert their opposition. They are at perfect liberty to hold their opinions; but we have not so learned Christ. Nor can we think that the history of Methodism can possess any interest for such, nor indeed for any, who do not believe that the Gospel offers a full, a free, and a present salvation; so that

Parties who reject our views on this subject.

every penitent sinner may, by faith in Christ, find mercy, and be enabled through this faith to rejoice in a sin-pardoning God; and that thenceforth he may go on from strength to strength, growing in grace, and in holiness of heart and life. Where these doctrines are believed, taught, and to any extent experienced, we think there may be a revival of religion.

Origin of revivals.

Strictly speaking, every such gracious season has its origin in the abundant mercy and gracious influence of the Spirit of God. If men are stirred up to pray with unwonted energy, to preach the Gospel with unusual plainness, earnestness, and zeal, if sinners are alarmed on account of their sins, and backsliders tremble under a sense of their unfaithfulness, these effects can only result from Divine influence acting potently on human minds. In some of the cases which have been described in the preceding pages, this influence has been marvellously powerful; to such an extent, indeed, that the stoutest-hearted sinners have fallen overwhelmed before it.

Promoted by human instrumentality.

Usually, however, it is not difficult to perceive the action of human instrumentality in revivals of religion. The Spirit prompts to earnest prayer, and men obey. The same Divine Agent suggests increased plainness of speech and earnestness in offering the Gospel message; and His servants are found "workers together with Him." And these signs are perceptible, sometimes, long before the pentecostal blessing comes down. It is true this human instrumentality cannot always be traced to every individual case. God on some occasions speaks directly to the sinner's conscience, and prostrates him at the footstool of mercy in such exquisite anguish, that he can do nothing, and think of nothing, but groan his desires to God, until His anger is turned away, and the pardoned sinner rejoices in the experience of salvation.

A revival of religion, therefore, is a more than usual display of saving grace; a revelation of Divine power working for the increase and extension of religion with more than ordinary effect. It is this circumstance which has led people of the world generally, and even some pious and intelligent Christians, to dislike, and sometimes violently to oppose, revivals. We accordingly hear such terms as "wildness, extravagance, madness, fanaticism," applied to the earnestness of preachers, and to the impassioned cries and exclamations of the people, when awakened to a sense of their danger.

Possibility of occasional impropriety.

We say, once for all, that we make no indiscriminate defence of the words or actions of either the one or the other of these classes. We have heard preachers and leaders, at such times, express themselves with rashness and indiscretion; and we have seen people in a state of excitement truly fearful, which has been productive of very unpleasant results. We do not justify, but regret and deplore, such cases. But we appeal to any one who believes in the spiritual religion which the Bible teaches, whether such conduct, however much it is to be regretted, is greatly to be wondered at.

Reasonableness of religious excitement.

Here is a man whose soul is alive to God; on whose heart the claims of God to warn sinners of their danger, and point them to Jesus for salvation, lie with fearful weight; whose whole soul is penetrated with a sense of his own responsibility, and of the intense evil and consequent danger of sin. Yet, in discharging this great duty in those circumstances, he is expected to be uniformly calm and sedate; to use measured expressions, and in no instance to overstep the bounds of reason, or of good taste. The physician, when dealing with a case of great danger, is forgiven if he displays emotion; the advocate, when

pleading for the life of a client, is often applauded when he utters language warranted by neither charity nor truth; but the minister, in a case inexpressibly more affecting, must always be cool and unimpassioned. We say, the very reverse may reasonably be expected; that to a man holding forth by the command of God his offer of mercy to guilty sinners, the words of Dr. Young apply with as much truth as beauty:—

> "On such a theme 't is impious to be calm:
> Passion is reason, transport temper here."

Still less can an awakened sinner, confronted in spirit with the justice of God, and trembling in agony beneath His frown, be expected always to control his emotions, and preserve himself from intense, and it may be occasionally injurious, excitement. It should be considered that these are frequently persons who have been previously undisciplined, who find themselves acted on by a new class of fears, feelings, and desires, and to whose minds the Spirit of God has revealed spiritual things with very great power. We shall never forget the agony exhibited in the countenances of some persons, while, under deep convictions, they have been pleading with God for mercy;—a woman in particular, who, while on her knees engaged in earnest prayer, raising her countenance marked with the deepest anguish, her eyes streaming with tears, thus expressed her conviction of her danger: "I am hanging over hell by a thread."

No error on this subject is more unfounded than the notion that this excitement is produced in the minds of the people by the sermons and addresses which are delivered to them. In the case just mentioned, the woman had heard nothing whatever to affect her. While quietly pursuing her usual employment in the afternoon of the day, she was so

impressed with a sense of her danger through sin that she could not continue her labour, but made her way to the chapel and sought refuge in earnest prayer to God; and, after some hours, found peace, and went to her home rejoicing. Indeed, from lengthened observation, we are led to the opinion that at no time do sermons or addresses produce so little effect as during a revival. Previously, a spirit of hearing is frequently given in an unusual measure, and the congregations are not only larger, but very attentive. When, however, the Spirit is poured out in an extraordinary degree, it often seems as if His direct influence on individual minds were so great as almost to supersede human instrumentality.

Singular phenomena presented in revivals.

But it is frequently alleged that the conduct and manner of people thus affected in revivals is so exceedingly strange, that it cannot be reconciled with reason or religious order. And it must be freely admitted that many of the phenomena presented in a revival are most extraordinary, and in some cases unaccountable.

We remember, during the revival in Cornwall in 1824, the case of an agricultural labourer, who, whilst working in his master's field, was ruminating on the revival of which he had heard, although he had not attended any chapel to witness it. While thus engaged, he became deeply serious, and at length greatly concerned for his salvation. At first he resolved to attend the neighbouring chapel in the evening. This, however, did not satisfy him; his trouble increased, until he could continue his labour no longer. He accordingly took his coat on his arm, and walked away to the nearest chapel, which was rather more than half a mile distant. When he got there, he found some penitents on their knees in distress, and some experienced Christians praying with them, and encouraging

them to believe in Christ. He paused, looked with deep interest on the scene; but, at length turning away, he said to himself, "I shall get no good there." So he walked on to the next chapel, rather more than a mile farther. There he found, in the school-room attached to the chapel, a scene very similar to that which he had left behind him: penitents in distress, and persons praying with them. Again he paused; and again turned away with the same remark on his lips, "I shall get no good there;" and so he walked on another mile to the next chapel. There he found persons similarly engaged; and, after a little hesitation, said, "I must pray to God for mercy, and may as well begin." So he went in, fell on his knees, and prayed most earnestly to God for the pardon of his sins. At length his prayer was answered, and he returned to his home, nearly three miles off, rejoicing in God. The case of this man seemed very strange to his neighbours at the time, and may appear unreasonable, and even ridiculous, now; although, if his feelings were fairly analysed, it might be found that the natural unwillingness of his heart to submit to the influence of the Spirit of God forms the key to his conduct.

The noise and violence in which some penitents indulge during their distress, have been much objected to. Yet it cannot be denied that this is compatible with true sincerity, and may not unreasonably result from deep inward feeling. We witnessed the case of a man who had been a great sinner and a prize-wrestler, a mighty man of strength and energy, with a form like Hercules. He, too, in one of these revivals, was brought to the foot of the cross, and, kneeling, prayed in agony of spirit. His struggle continued for some two or three hours, and during that time he beat his knees through the flooring-boards on which they rested.

This was done so completely, that both boards were fairly broken, and had to be replaced immediately. He found peace with God, and for many years evinced the reality of his conversion by a godly and consistent life. We agree with the objector, that this violent action was altogether unnecessary; but when such a spirit is so deeply troubled, how is it to be restrained?

The gradual way in which deep conviction gathers over the mind, and the enduring manner in which mercy is sought after it has acquired intensity, forms a singular feature in the case of some who are brought to God in these revivals. We have the case of a Cornish miner now before us, a man of more than ordinary mental energy, who had led a very wicked life for many years. Hearing of a revival, he went to the chapel, to see and hear what was going on. At first he was careless and trifling, but he attended regularly day after day, and witnessed the distress and prayers of penitents, and their transition into the experience of peace and joy. After a while he became thoughtful and grave, and at length a deep gloom gathered over his countenance; until, after the lapse of several days, he called the woman who cleaned the chapel, and who was in attendance, to bring him a large jug of cold water. She did so, and asked him for whom he wanted it. He replied, "Take it into that pew: I have the hardest job to do that I ever did in my life, and which will take me some time." So saying, he stripped off his coat and neck-cloth, and, putting them aside, knelt down and began to pray. He continued wrestling earnestly with God; and, when quite exhausted, would take a draught of water, and again resume his prayer. He continued thus for six hours, without rising from his knees, when God spoke peace to his soul, and made him a happy partaker of Divine love. The change was visible in his

countenance,—was seen and admitted by all. He indeed proved its reality by living a sober and godly life. He soon became very useful as a prayer-leader, and afterwards still more so, as a leader of a Class.

Yet perhaps the sudden conviction of persons at these times is still more remarkable as a phenomenon than that which we have just considered. Such cases have been very frequent. We give one instance. At the evening meeting of a revival two respectable young women attended, and were engaged in looking on those in distress with apparent unconcern; both of them being thoughtless, and full of gaiety. One of them had made some trifling remark to her companion, who, having turned round for a moment, did not immediately reply: when, after a momentary delay, she looked around to do so, she found the speaker at her feet. She had suddenly fallen on her knees, and in deep distress began to pray for mercy, and ceased not until she was blessed with the pardon of her sins.

We give one further instance, illustrative of the mighty power with which grace operates on such occasions, and of the pious temper of mind which it produces. A strong, vigorous, and tolerably intelligent young woman, working at a mine in Cornwall, and employed in breaking the copper ores with a hammer on an iron anvil, in company with many others similarly occupied, had heard of the revival which was then in the neighbourhood. Mary—for that was her name—turned all she had been told into ridicule, and made herself and her companions exceedingly merry with the subject. She, however, had never attended any meeting, and consequently lacked the information necessary to give point and completeness to her profane jesting. This defect she said she would remedy by going to the revival meeting in the evening, watching

closely all that took place, and treasuring it up in her memory; and she promised her companions that she would repeat all that was said, and mimic all the noises made, for their amusement the following day.

To carry out this purpose, she went to the meeting, and for some time most carefully adhered to her plan, and enjoyed in anticipation the effect with which she should parody the scene on the morrow. At length, however, an arrow of deep conviction entered Mary's soul; she trembled; she felt the depth of her depravity and the magnitude of her transgressions; humbly and earnestly she cried to God for mercy. She continued thus engaged until just after midnight, when her mourning was turned into joy, and she was taken to her dwelling unspeakably happy in God.

In the morning, she as usual repaired to her place at the mine, and commenced her labour; but how changed! Hoarse with her recent crying, she could scarcely speak; full of heavenly peace and love, she wanted no communication with her companions; she took her seat in silence, and nothing fell from her lips but a scarcely audible whisper, as she occasionally lifted her heart in thanksgiving to God. Of course, this mighty change attracted attention, and the girls about her soon guessed the cause, and said, "Mary is converted." The strange intelligence passed to other houses, where women were similarly occupied; and one and another would come and look on her; and, as they saw her sit in silence, with a heavenly smile on her lips and joy beaming in her eye, they retired, saying, "Yes; Mary is converted." At length, however, one young woman who had been intimate with Mary, and well knew her passionate fondness for finery, came, and looking on her said, "No; she is not converted: look at those

fine large earrings in her ears still! If she had been converted, she would not continue to wear them." These words gave to poor Mary the first idea of the earrings, since the change had come over her mind. Without saying a word, she laid down her hammer, took the earrings from her ears, and laid them on the anvil; when, resuming her work, she pounded them to atoms, and swept them away with the pulverized ore, humming the while,—

> "Neither passion nor pride His cross can abide,
> They melt in the fountain that flows from His side;"

finishing by looking up, and saying, "Praise the Lord, they are gone." The effect on the spectators was irresistible; the most incredulous withdrew their objections, and all agreed that "Mary was converted." Her future conduct fully justified the conclusion, for she lived a pious and devoted Christian.

The allegation that revivals are not permanently beneficial.

But it is alleged that revivals are, after all, not ultimately beneficial to the churches which are visited by them; that those who are so strangely and rapidly converted are found with equal facility to abandon their profession, and to relapse into their former courses of wickedness and sin. We are well aware that large revivals have been followed by the declension of many who were brought into Society by their means. But it has been too hastily assumed, that this proves the work of grace to have been superficial or merely a pretence. A revival, such as we have many times seen, and which has been witnessed at different times in different countries, is a great and unusual work of God, issuing in the sound conversion of many sinners unto the faith of Christ. But it does not follow, that, because these persons have been brought to the experience of salvation in an unusual way, an equally uncommon measure of spiritual influence is to

Danger of declension.

watch over and keep them in all their future course. They are made lambs of Christ's flock, and are committed to the elders and ministers of the church to be "shepherded" and trained up for heaven. We blush to confess that, in many instances, this has been sadly, very sadly, neglected. An adequate measure of judgment and caution has been seldom used in placing such converts with suitable leaders, and in connexion with old and experienced Christians. Not unfrequently they have been grouped together by dozens in Classes, without a mature Christian among them.

The case of converts not adequately met.

Another grievous evil often seen is the neglect to make adequate ministerial provision for the great number of members thus added to Societies. We know of cases in which 1,000, 1,200, and 1,500 members have been added to a Circuit in a few months; and yet no addition whatever made to the number of ministers employed. In one of these cases there was a small country Society which for many years consisted of a Class ranging in number from ten to fourteen. These were stirred up to additional effort, and, after immense struggles, they raised a neat new chapel, capable of holding about one hundred and forty persons. Soon after the opening of this place of worship, a revival visited that Circuit; 1,200 members were added to it in one quarter, and of these 120 to this small Society. No addition was made to the number of ministers on the Circuit; and, consequently, the minister could only visit this interesting Society, as heretofore, once in the quarter, for the renewal of tickets! In such a case, what efficient local oversight and aid could be rendered by the ten or twelve old members to one hundred and twenty converts? What fostering care could a minister afford them in one visit every three months? Yet, if in those circumstances these

Nor suitable addition made to the number of ministers.

converts evinced instability or unfaithfulness, their revival conversion would by many be regarded as superficial, if not, indeed, altogether a deception. It must be admitted by every candid Christian that such censure is unjust; the fault in all probability would not be in the manner of conversion, but in the subsequent neglect.

Notwithstanding this neglect, revivals have been beneficial.

Yet although too frequently the fruits of revivals have been very insufficiently cared for, and consequently serious loss has been sustained, it is not true that these gracious visitations have produced no lasting good to the churches which have been thus favoured. It is a fact abundantly proved by ample evidence, that those Circuits which have been thus visited have increased in numbers far beyond the average of the Connexion.* Let attention be directed to one single case, of which mention has already been made. The numbers reported to the Conference in June, 1814, from the Cornwall District, were 14,616: these were taken but about three months after the great revival in that county took place. Twelve months afterward the numbers were 14,296; a decrease of a little more than two *per cent.* on the year. Now surely this is not an unreasonable decrease. As almost all who were within the range of Methodist influence were brought into the Society at this time, there was little material left to work upon for the future; and the ordinary number of deaths, backslidings, and removals, would have made three times this number: so that there is no proof whatever of any falling back; the decrease in the numbers might be fully accounted for by the fact of the diminished numbers received into the Society not being sufficient to meet the ordinary loss from deaths and other causes. And surely the Christian sta-

* The Rev. Robert Young's "Showers of Blessing," p. 455. A very useful work, which contains a fund of valuable and important information.

bility of persons, after they have been members of a Christian church fifteen or sixteen months, is not affected by the manner in which they were first brought acquainted with religion.

Great advantages of them.

We may excite surprise, and provoke some opposition by the declaration; but after much experience in the working of Methodism, and in the results of many revivals, we have no hesitation in declaring our full belief, that a larger proportion of persons brought into Society in revivals, when properly cared for, continue members to the end of their lives, than of those who join it in the ordinary way. We would rather trust the stability of the former than that of the latter for every religious purpose whatever; and for this reason, that in our judgment a larger proportion of them are truly converted to God. There is no doubt that in almost every revival many are superficially and sympathetically affected. Some of those may attend chapel, and, perhaps, meet for a while in Class; but not many of them continue to meet during their three months on trial, and become accredited members of Society. In those who do we have stronger confidence, than in any equal number of persons who become members in the usual and gradual manner. Nor can it be denied that many of the most zealous, self-denying, and useful ministers in the body have been eminently honoured as instruments in promoting and extending these revivals of religion.

But still some persons will ask, "What is the real good of these revivals? Is it not better for a religious body to go on steadily and gradually, progressing in the experience of the Divine life, and increasing in numbers and in power?" Regarding this as an abstract question, we have no answer to make to it. We think it better to gather a knowledge of what is best, from the revelations of the Divine

will which we have in the word of God and in the operations of His grace, than from any mere inductions of our own reason. The history of God's work of grace among men from the beginning has been, in a great measure, a record of alternate religious declension and revival. And in Gospel times the Lord has given His church abundant proofs of His willingness to reveal His enlightening influence and saving power, in answer to believing prayer, to an extent far beyond what His people are generally prepared to admit. Instead, therefore, of adopting any language or conduct having the appearance of cavil, or opposition to any display of saving mercy, it far better becomes His church to inquire with humble reverence in what way they can more fully "become workers together with Him;" and if they see His arm made bare in dispensing convincing power or converting grace, let them prayerfully endeavour to husband the fruits of such gracious visitations, and to imitate Him who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

Importance of correct views and conduct in regard of revivals.

We dismiss this subject, (in which we feel a very deep interest,) with the expression of our regret that it has not been regarded by the church of Christ with the attention, candour, and enlightened judgment which it merits. Not a few identify a revival with rant, extravagance, and enthusiasm, and therefore do not prayerfully seek, nor beneficially enjoy, those times "of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," which are a high privilege and a great blessing; while, on the other hand, others who do appreciate these visitations, and prayerfully and faithfully seek to participate in their blessing, have not always met the harvest of souls thus given with a suitable measure of liberality, diligence, and godly caution. Instead of regarding such displays of grace as claims for corresponding self-

denial, and thus providing spiritual culture for those souls so strangely gathered into the fold of Christ, it is to be feared there has been sometimes joy felt that the increase of members will lessen the demand for the pecuniary contributions of the old members. When Christian men who are thus favoured rise above every sordid feeling, and labour fully to supply every demand which the increasing requirements of the church make on their property, time, and abilities, and thus afford ample provision to insure to every convert the best possible religious oversight and instruction, we shall see the cause of God more abundantly prosper and prevail.

Revivals have wonderfully displayed the presence and power of God.

Whatever doubt may attach to our opinions and judgment on this subject in the estimation of our readers, we are certain of this, that we have never so fully realized deep and holy impressions of the presence and power of God to save from sin, as in some of those seasons which have been regarded by many as scenes of confusion and disorder. O, how gloriously has Jehovah revealed Himself! How fearfully has He revealed His wrath against all unrighteousness, and confronted the terror-stricken sinner with all the terrors of judgment! And yet, at the same moment, how blessedly and graciously has He revealed Himself in pardoning mercy to the broken-hearted, believing penitent! We can scarcely believe it possible for God to reveal Himself more marvellously in a world of material existence, than we have known it done in some of those seasons, when all classes of mind, persons of every age, men and women of every description of character, the pious and profane alike, have, with one accord, stood awe-stricken in the felt presence of the heart-searching God.

CHAPTER II.

THE MISSIONS OF THE PERIOD.

THE Methodist Societies missionary in their Spirit and Design—The Principles and Practice of Wesley respecting Missions—Dr. Coke and the Missionary Committee—The Spirit of the Times unfavourable to missionary Effort—State of the Missions in 1800—Missionary Progress in the ensuing ten Years—State of the Missions in 1810—Great Changes introduced into the missionary Economy—The Consequences of Dr. Coke's Mission to India—Manner in which the requisite Changes were introduced—Mr. Bunting's Action at Leeds—Opposition to Missionary Meetings—Their great practical Benefit—The Organization of the Missionary Society carried on gradually—The State of the Missions in 1815—The Missions prosecuted with great Vigour and Success—Increase in Mission Funds—The Mission Cause, as presented in the Report for 1816.

The Methodist Societies missionary in their spirit and design

FROM the commencement, the Methodist Societies were missionary in their spirit and design. They arose out of an experience of Christianity in its true and comprehensive character; and were formed, not on any geographical basis, but with a studied adaptation to bear the Gospel to all who needed it, and especially to those who needed it most. Nothing that Wesley ever did, in the whole course of his eventful life, was a greater departure from the established principles, ideas, and conventional practices of the age, than the enunciation of the broad catholic maxim, "The world is my parish."

Principles and practice of Wesley respecting Missions.

The irreligious and immoral state of England for some considerable time absorbed the labours, energies, and thoughts of that apostolic man. Yet, when a necessity arose, and an opening was presented, true to the eminently

Christian principles on which he always acted, although exceedingly limited in financial resources, and straitened for suitable agents to carry on the great work in which he was engaged, Wesley, in 1769, sent Boardman and Pilmoor as missionaries to America,—a measure which has issued in the evangelization of a continent.

The same method was uniformly pursued throughout the whole course of Wesley's life. The missionary operations which then existed, were not initiated and carried on as a work separate and distinct from that at home, but as parts of the one great evangelical labour in which he was engaged. And hence, when Boardman and Pilmoor had entered on their transatlantic labours, we find America entered in the list of Circuits, as naturally as though it had been part of Cornwall or of Scotland. Nor was there any plan devised for prosecuting Missions as a distinct and settled purpose; but in truth, Wesley regarding the world as his parish, wherever openings were presented, or the cry of "Come over and help us" heard, there, if possible, a preacher was sent. Thus Methodism was introduced into the Norman Isles, the West Indies, and a few other places, before the founder of Methodism was called to his reward. The result of these efforts was, that at this period there were, besides the Methodists in Great Britain, Ireland, and the neighbouring islands, 7 Circuits, 13 preachers, and 4,500 members, in the West Indies; 4 Circuits, 6 preachers, and 800 members, in British America; and 97 Circuits, 198 preachers, and 43,265 members in the United States. But as this latter country had been totally separated from British rule by the Declaration of Independence, the Methodist Societies there, although always recognising Wesley as their head, became a separate and distinct church. There remained, therefore,

at the time of Wesley's death, but 11 Circuits, 19 preachers, and 5,300 members, which really constituted the Methodist Missions.

Dr. Coke and the Missionary Committee

It is rather a remarkable circumstance, that in the last Conference at which Wesley presided a Committee was appointed for the management of the West India Missions. It consisted of nine preachers, with Dr. Coke at their head. He had for some years previously devoted himself in a very special and energetic manner to originate and extend the Missions, and had begged from door to door, through different parts of the country, to raise funds for their support. It is impossible to say how much of the Christian sympathy which still animates Methodism is the direct result of his earnest and simple, but very effective, advocacy of the religious interests of the heathen and the slave. He had seen the West Indies in the worst days of slavery, had heard the clanking of the chains there, and his Christian and benevolent heart had done all that man could do, to gauge the amount of their misery, and to measure the extent of their claims on the justice and benevolence of Christian and charitable men. And his simple tale of their wrongs, and of their need of the Gospel, although sometimes coldly and cruelly repulsed, was so extensively successful, that it produced a vibration of feeling throughout the length and breadth of the land, which we are persuaded has not to this day ceased to beat.

This agency was continued in operation. Dr. Coke was still relied on by the Conference, as the principal director of this important department of labour; and, to a great extent, as the means of procuring funds for its support; while the Committee served as a council to assist and advise with him, whenever occasion required. Justice cannot be done to the parties who had for many years

carried on these missionary operations, and who now adopted these arrangements for their continuance and extension, if the time when these events took place, and the state of public feeling on the subject, be not taken into the account. The appointment of this Committee was made in August, 1790, and the efforts which gathered these 5,000 church members had taken place previously. The country at the time was exceedingly apathetic on the subject of Missions; indeed, the subject had scarcely been brought before the British public. The tone of the current literature was decidedly unfavourable to them. Keats's extravagant account of the Pelew Islands had, by the fascination with which it was invested, led extensively to the notion that great numbers of the heathen in lands unknown lived in a state of virtue and happiness. Nor had any great agency arisen to dispel the fatal illusion, and render the darkness of heathendom visible to British Christians. The Moravians had exerted themselves nobly, but their means were limited. The Baptist Missionary Society was established in 1792; the (London) Missionary Society in 1795; and the Edinburgh, or Scottish, and the Glasgow Missionary Societies in 1796. The difficulty which opposed the early Methodist efforts, unsupported and uncountenanced as they were, may therefore be readily conceived.

The spirit of the times unfavourable to missionary effort.

Nor were these difficulties at home the only obstacles with which Dr. Coke and his fellow-labourers had to contend. No sooner had the dawning rays of Gospel light been cast on the inhabitants of the West India Islands, through missionary effort, than the curse of slavery began to appear in all its hideous deformity. As early as 1792 Negro women in St. Eustatius were severely flogged for attending a prayer-meeting. And in January, 1793, Mr. Lumb, the missionary, was immured in a gaol in St. Vincent's, for

preaching the Gospel to the Negroes. When the state of society in some of these islands is known, this opposition to the truth, and cruel persecution of its teachers, will cease to be surprising. Ignorance, impurity, and licentiousness fearfully prevailed. Yet, wherever the Gospel could be preached, it was revealed as the power of God unto salvation, and from the most degraded and abandoned of human beings trophies were won to the Saviour, and souls were raised to rejoice in the peace and love of God.

Notwithstanding, however, the persecution and cruelty with which the missionaries and their converts were treated, occasions were not wanting to prove that they were loyal and devoted subjects, and the best friends of the ruling authorities. In St. Vincent's, a plot had been laid among the Negro slaves to unite in one general insurrection, and murder all the white inhabitants. Not long before this plot would have been ripe for execution, some intimation of the design reached a Negro member of the Methodist Society, who at once told the missionary, by whom the intelligence was immediately conveyed to the governor, who, taking instant and decisive measures for the security of the island, prevented the intended massacre.

State of the Missions in 1800

In the Conference of 1800, ten years after that to which reference has been made, further and extended regulations were brought into operation for the management of the Missions; a collection was ordered to be made in every chapel in the Connexion for their support; and it was positively enjoined that the mode of service, and all the distinctive features of Methodism, such as lovefeasts, &c., should be observed at every Mission station, as in England. There being a deficiency of men to act as missionaries, the chairmen of the Districts were directed to make an annual inquiry in their respective Districts, whether there were any

suitable local preachers willing to offer themselves as candidates for the work. The numbers reported at this time, although not large, yet showed a cheering progress. There were now 30 missionaries and 13,667 members in the West Indies and British America, giving an increase of 11 preachers and 8,367 members in the ten years. It will be seen, that the additional agency is very disproportionate to its success. While the preachers are only increased about one-third, the number of members was much more than doubled :—a proof that God was going before His people in this good work.

Missionary progress in the ensuing ten years.

This state of things was altered in the ensuing ten years; but without much improving the prospects of the Mission cause. Dr. Coke was unremitting in his diligence and activity to strengthen the missionary band, and succeeded to some considerable extent. But the most formidable difficulties opposed their progress. The war which raged with France was carried on vigorously in the West Indies. Some of the islands were invaded; the motions of the missionaries were much impeded. But the greatest difficulty arose from the intolerance of the colonial governments, by which means the missionaries were repeatedly silenced, the chapels shut up, even local preachers and leaders prevented from meeting for worship. Congregations which it had taken years of labour to gather, were thus scattered; and Societies which had cost large sums of money, and even missionary life, to raise, were ruthlessly destroyed. So terribly did these causes operate, that in 1810, although the number of missionaries was increased from 30 to 43, the number of members was reduced from 13,667 to 13,580.

State of the Missions in 1810.

We would not regard such an issue as a failure. During this decade many hundreds of Negroes, who had been converted to God amid slavery, persecution, and torment, were

guided by this blessed agency to the end of their course, and safely lodged in Abraham's bosom. Thousands, notwithstanding the unfavourable influences by which they were surrounded, had been supplied with religious instruction and consolation, and been assisted to maintain their faith in Christ, and to persevere in the way to heaven; while a number had been turned from a course of sin to a life of righteousness, nearly sufficient to supply the places of those who had died in the faith, or been turned out of the way. This, indeed, does not satisfy us. With increasing efforts and an enlarged agency, increase and progress are reasonably expected; and it is painful to contemplate the prevention of such success by the wicked, cruel, and intolerant opposition of men calling themselves civilized and enlightened Christians.

Great changes introduced into the missionary economy.

A great change was now to come over the whole system of the Methodist missionary economy; a change, pregnant with the most important results to the church and the world, and which was brought about and consummated in the most remarkable manner. To this time, Dr. Coke had been the directing genius of the Methodist Missions. For although he had never ceased to take a deep interest in the general concerns of the Methodist Connexion, it was to this object especially that his laborious life was chiefly devoted; and, as the general superintendent of this department, his mind and judgment held paramount sway. Yet, it must be admitted, that this whole work was carried on without any proper system. A Committee had been appointed, and an annual collection; but still, Dr. Coke's periodical itinerant begging was an important element in procuring supplies, and this mode of raising funds was neither likely to be permanent nor satisfactory. Indeed, the whole of the executive authority and arrangements

were such, that a great and successful extension of the Methodist missionary agency could scarcely be hoped for, whilst the work was conducted and sustained in this manner.

Yet although these defects were extensively perceived, few could suggest the means by which any effective improvement could be introduced. Dr. Coke's position was so peculiar,—he had endeared himself to the whole Methodist community by his piety and labours to such an extent, that no thought could be entertained of superseding him in the direction of the Mission work. And, without this, it would seem next to impossible to effect such a renovation in its management and mode of operation, as would meet all the requirements of the case. The condition of the country was also peculiarly unfavourable for making any great change, or prosecuting any important enterprise. England was then at war, we might almost say, with all Europe and America. The extent of Napoleon's power and resources had become immense, and this country, determined to resist them to the utmost, was carrying on the struggle at a tremendous cost of life and money. Yet, strange to say, at this juncture circumstances occurred which induced the Methodist community to undertake Missions of greater magnitude and importance than they had ever yet done, and to commit the honour and resources of the Connexion to the evangelization of the world, to an extent previously unthought of. What is still more remarkable, the same circumstances led to a complete and effective renovation of the missionary economy, by placing the greatest talent and judgment in the Connexion on its direction, and by associating the religious principle and Christian feeling of the whole body with its support and extension.

The consequences of Dr. Coke's Mission to India.

The means which wrought all these important results were as strange and remarkable in their nature and character, as in their consequences. They were nothing less than the determination of Dr. Coke, at the age of sixty-six, to undertake in person a Mission to Asia, and to devote his life and fortune to the conversion of India. The motives which induced this remarkable course, and the manner in which it was carried into effect, have been already narrated. We direct attention to them now for the purpose of showing the important effects which followed, in the improved organization, support, and direction of this great work.

After the Conference of 1813, when Dr. Coke obtained the sanction of that body to his proposed Mission to Asia, he was, as he said, "dead to Europe, and alive for India:" it became therefore necessary to devise means to supply the vacancy thus created in all respects. As the Connexion had by this measure incurred serious additional responsibility, the first and most urgent want would be increased financial resources. This was attempted by the formation of District Associations, and the appointment of public missionary meetings. The promptitude with which these institutions were called into vigorous and effectual action, is a sufficient proof that we have not misconceived the nature and extent of the necessity which existed previously; and also that we are not mistaken in believing that it was keenly felt. No endeavour was made to supply the place of Dr. Coke by the appointment of another general superintendent. There were other ministers in the body of age and experience, but no one was put forward to fill the vacancy. There were at that time in Methodism men of popular talents and address, who were not deficient in zeal and energy; but no one of them was sought out to supply the place of Dr. Coke in raising funds for the Missions.

It was apparent that the old plan of begging and governing had fairly died out; it was obsolete; and nothing remained, when those remarkable circumstances made a change inevitable, but to re-organize the whole framework of the Methodist missionary institutions, and to secure a more enlarged and effective method of obtaining pecuniary supplies for their support.

Manner in which the requisite changes were introduced.

This was not done in any summary way. Methodism has never been distinguished for anything of this kind. No meeting of the magnates of the day was summoned; no formal legislation was devised; nothing in the way of organic change, or sudden transition to a new economy, was heard of. The case was dealt with in a purely *Wesleyan* manner. Ministers of the greatest ability, and laymen of the highest station, knowledge, and experience, consulted together as opportunity offered; and it was resolved to hold a public meeting at Leeds, to initiate a Missionary Association for that District. As already stated, this was done with a degree of success beyond the most sanguine hopes of its projectors.

Mr. Bunting's action at Leeds.

There can be no doubt that Jabez Bunting was the moving and directing spirit of the great experiment made at Leeds. He fairly grappled with the difficulty, and solved it. Considering all the circumstances of the case, we do not know a more striking instance of moral courage in Methodist history than was displayed by him, especially considering his standing in the body, when, as others recoiled from the responsibility of acting on that occasion, he said, "If no one else will be a fool for Christ's sake, I will." But, having committed himself to this course of action, he was supported by the most talented, pious, and useful of the Methodist preachers and people. The Methodists of the present day, however, must not sup-

Opposition to missionary meetings.

pose that this movement was made without its promoters encountering the chilling blast of opposition and gloomy despondency. We well remember the sad forebodings of many timid spirits on that occasion. "The simplicity of Methodism was to be destroyed by these meetings. They were carnal and worldly. They never could be maintained. The reaction would be fearful. In a word, they were a device of the devil to mar Methodism in all its agency."

Their great practical benefit.

How does the history of their progress laugh these gloomy forebodings to scorn! What institution of ancient or modern times has been productive of an equal amount of religious, moral, and intellectual benefit to the world? As to their direct bearing on Missions, who can estimate the amount of information they have communicated? The state of the heathen world has been investigated, and its moral and religious necessities ascertained, as far, at least, as boundless darkness, depravity, and danger can be defined. Sound religious and philosophical views of man, in all the varieties of his species, and in all the possible conditions of his nature in relation to God, have been extensively circulated. Correct scriptural doctrines respecting the religious duty of Christian men to send the Gospel of Christ to every human creature on the earth's surface, have been urged with immense ability and astonishing success. The author well remembers having exerted himself to enforce these views on a missionary platform, many-years ago, in the presence of that excellent, eminent, and deeply lamented young minister, the Rev. Richard Treffry, Jun., who came and sat by his side after the speech was finished, and said, "I quite agree with you. I fully believe it is the duty of all Christians to do something towards sending the Gospel to the heathen; but I fear the Methodist people are not yet ripe

for the reception of such sentiments. I fear we must submit, for some time longer yet, to plead this cause on the score of charity." That intelligent, amiable minister was a good judge of the state of the Connexion, and might have been quite correct in his opinion; but, if so, cheering progress has since been made. A person might now travel through the length and breadth of Methodism, and not find an intelligent person doubting the propriety of urging missionary exertion as a Christian duty.

More than this has been done by the means of these meetings. An amount of information has been given to the Connexion which is incalculable. Geography, history, and religion have been expounded, and general knowledge communicated, to an extent that can scarcely be conceived. A school for public speaking on religious matters has also been thus established, which has been of immense benefit. But that which has perhaps been of the greatest general utility has been the weight and importance which have been thus given to the cause of Missions, by the consecration of the highest intelligence, the most brilliant imagination, the most fervent piety, and the greatest weight of Christian character, of which the Connexion can boast, to this grand object. Who has distinguished himself in Methodism by the manifestation of any excellence, who has not, through the means of missionary meetings, in some way and to some extent, thrown the weight of it into the scale of the missionary cause? Who has not felt a deeper interest in this holy enterprise from seeing associated with it the profound mind of Watson, the masculine eloquence of Newton, the subduing pathos of Lessey, the brilliant vehemency of Beaumont, or the dramatic oratory of William Dawson? The splendid gifts and acknowledged excellence of the advocates, while deriving additional lustre

from their connexion with such a glorious cause, have imparted to our appreciation of it a weight and importance we should otherwise have never felt.

The organization of the Missionary Society carried on gradually.

Although we value so highly the great improvements introduced into the home economy of the Mission work, and mark with delight the rapidity with which Missionary Associations were formed in every District in the island, we do not mistake the extent of the arrangements then made so far as to represent the organization thus happily begun as having been completed. This was not attempted. The men who introduced these measures knew well the magnitude of the work on which they were engaged, and the great importance of making every advance with such foresight and caution as never to have occasion to retrace their steps. They accordingly proceeded by gradually developing the sound principles which had been laid down, and adding to existing regulations, until they found themselves possessed of sufficient information and experience to place the Methodist Missionary Society in a fully organized and complete form before the Connexion and the world in the year 1817. As our present volume does not extend to that date, we must defer a full account of these final arrangements to a future occasion.

Meanwhile progressive improvements were introduced and brought into operation mainly under the direction of Jabez Bunting, Richard Watson, and other able coadjutors. A great step was made towards the organization of the Society in 1815, when a series of regulations were placed on the Minutes "for the future management of those important concerns." On that occasion an Executive Committee was appointed, consisting of the preachers stationed in London, and the two general treasurers, to

superintend during the intervals of the sittings of Conference the Missions and the missionaries. A Committee of examination and finance was also appointed at the same time, to consist of the president and secretary of the Conference, the two general treasurers, and those other members of the Executive Committee who could attend, nine other travelling preachers, and nine other respectable members of Society, "not being itinerant preachers." This was an important step in a direction afterward very largely followed, under the same auspices, in this and other departments of Methodism.

The state of the Missions in 1815.

The wisdom and vigour with which the management of the Society's affairs was conducted in respect of its internal economy, was extended to the operations abroad. Missions were formed or invigorated in France, Gibraltar, Sierra Leone, at the Cape of Good Hope, and in Ceylon, in addition to the old established ones in the West Indies and British America. At the Conference of 1815, the total number on the several Mission Stations was 19,885, being an increase, over the numbers of 1810, of 6,305. So that whereas during the ten years from 1800 to 1810, there was a small decrease in the number of members on the Mission Stations, in the following years there was an increase of above 6,300. As might be expected, the younger Missions could not add much to this increase; and it is indeed the more gratifying, that above six thousand of the number are found as the increase in the West Indies and British America. And what was still more encouraging, at the close of the period now under consideration, the Missions in those countries presented a more healthy and prosperous aspect than they had ever previously exhibited. There were less persecution and opposition, and more encouraging signs of success.

The Missions prosecuted with great vigour and success.

The new Stations presented an equally interesting appearance. There was at that day especially, when the public mind was full of recollections of the horrible barbarism and cruelty of the Kaffirs, and of apprehensions respecting the pestilential climate of Africa, and when India had been so recently laid open to missionary enterprise, a boldness, and even a grandeur, in the attempt to locate Methodist ministers in every quarter of the globe; and through them to preach Christ to Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. The energy evinced in the prosecution of the Mission to the East was most praiseworthy. Although the eminent and honoured originator and leader of that attack on the old, and long impregnable, fortress of idolatry and superstition was taken to his reward, the Methodist preachers and people of that day put forth their claim to his bequest of the daring, expense, and labour of the work to them, as his executors in trust. Hearing of the favourable reception of the missionaries in Ceylon, the Conference sent out six additional men; so that at the time when our present narrative ceases, the places of the missionaries removed by death had been supplied, the Mission to Ceylon had been strengthened, and means provided to open a way for the Gospel into Continental India, through Bombay and Madras.

Increase in Mission funds.

It will serve to show the stimulus given toward the close of this period to the Mission cause, to mention, that "during the year ending February 1st, 1814, the regular income of the Methodist Mission fund was £6,820. 2*s*. 6*d*.; and, by means of an extraordinary public collection for the purpose of paying off arrears due to treasurers, a further sum of £2,464. 7*s*. 4*d*. was raised. A considerable part of this amount was applied to the spread of the Gospel in the more neglected parts of England and Wales, under

the name of Home Missions. In consequence of the establishment of District Societies, the holding of missionary meetings, and employment of collectors, the Report of the following year states that the sum raised for missionary purposes was £9,554. 4*s*. 4½*d*.; and, during the period extending from August 18th, 1815, to June, 1816, the sum of £10,423. 10*s*. 9*d*. was raised by the friends of the Methodist Missions, and placed at the disposal of the Managing Committee." *

The Mission cause, as presented in the Report for 1816.

The following extracts from the Report presented at the last-mentioned date, the first which was written by Mr. Richard Watson, will afford some idea of the views which were then entertained of the work, and of the manner in which they were placed before the public :—

"The favourable reception of the missionaries sent to Ceylon, the successes of their early labours, and their earnest entreaties for additional help, in order to avail themselves of those opportunities of promoting the cause of Christ, which in every direction presented themselves, had given a new impulse to the missionary zeal of the Methodist Societies and congregations. They saw that Methodist Missions had a providential designation to the eastern, as well as to the western, world; whilst the additional light which was thrown on the wretched condition of the millions of Asia by the communications of the missionaries, had more deeply awakened their sympathies, and kindled more ardent desires to make known to them the grace and salvation of the glorious Gospel.

"The lamented death of the late Rev. Dr. Coke had itself heightened those feelings. The work in which his soul had greatly delighted, and in the prosecution of which he died, seemed to derive new interest from those retro-

* Jackson's "Life of Watson," p. 200.

spections to which the contemplation of his life, character, and labours necessarily led; and his loss, whilst it dictated the necessity of the exertions of the many to supply the efforts of one, diffused the spirit of holy zeal with those regrets which consecrated his memory.

"The formation of Missionary Societies, and the meetings held for that purpose, had also a large share in awakening a deeper and more general concern for the conversion of the heathen. Missions to various parts of the world had long been conducted by the Methodist Conference, and supported with great liberality; and the West India Mission, in particular, stands a noble monument of the faithful labours of the missionaries, and of the liberal support they met with at home: but by the operation of those Societies the deplorable state of the heathen was more fully displayed, the motives for the exertion of Christians were enforced, and the encouraging prospects of success in this great cause unfolded. Persons of all ranks of society had offered their service of time and money, and plans were adopted which promised a permanent and increasing supply for the support and enlargement of those benevolent undertakings, by which alone the blessings of Christianity can be fully communicated to mankind.

"The hopes which these circumstances excited in the Committee have not been disappointed. Success, in different degrees, has crowned the labours of the missionaries; a number of suitable young men have devoted themselves to this department of the work of God; the attention of the Committee has been called to new and important Stations of great promise; the liberality of the public has enabled the Committee considerably to increase the number of missionaries; and the spirit of Christian zeal which animates the bosoms of the numerous friends

of the Methodist Missions, expanded and corroborated as it is by the spirit of prayer offered with increased ardour, and more direct reference to the success of Missions, promises that permanence of principle, and activity of operation, which must issue, under the continued blessing of God, in the diffusion of the knowledge of Christ, with all its train of blessings, civil, religious, and eternal."

CHAPTER III.

METHODIST LITERATURE.

THE Wesleyan Literature of the preceding Period still in Circulation—"The Methodist Magazine"—Commentaries on the Bible—Dr. Coke's Commentary based on that of Dr. Dodd—The Materials of which the latter was composed—Benson's Commentary—Its Character—Dr. Clarke's Commentary—The Judgment of Dr. Etheridge respecting it—Character of the Work—Sutcliffe's Commentary—Extensive Sale of these Commentaries—Limited Information respecting Methodist Literature generally—Works on Biblical Criticism and Exposition by Drs. Clarke and Townley—Dr. Clarke's Translations and new Editions of important Works—Publications in Defence of the Doctrines of Scripture—Important Circulation of Tracts and Pamphlets having a similar Tendency—Works in Defence of Methodism—On History—On religious Biography and spiritual Experience—Conclusion.

The Wesleyan literature of the preceding period still in circulation.

IN treating of the literature of the preceding period in the first volume of this work, we were almost wholly limited to the publications of Wesley himself, and the sacred poetry of his brother Charles. These worthies having been removed from the scene, we proceed to consider the works of their sons in the Gospel, and of the people raised up through the labours of the Methodist preachers. It must not, however, be forgotten, when we estimate the literary privileges of the Methodists during this period, that, although we cannot again take account of the productions of the Wesleys, the most important of them remained on sale, and might be had on application to any of the Methodist preachers. They were, therefore, continued in extensive circulation. In forming our

estimate of the Methodist literature of the present period, we accordingly begin with the stock on hand at the close of the preceding one, and thence proceed to consider the principal productions of Methodist authors throughout the period of history over which the present volume ranges.

"The Methodist Magazine."

In doing this, we presume we should first notice the official literary organ of the body,—the "Magazine." This periodical, as previously stated, was begun by Wesley in 1778, under the name of the "Arminian Magazine," principally for the purpose of asserting and defending the doctrines of "general redemption," and was continued after his death on the same principles and for the same purpose. Henceforth, until the Conference of 1804, George Story was the editor; after which this important office was intrusted to Mr. Joseph Benson. It appears to have been Mr. Story's object, during the time the "Magazine" was under his care, that it should continue as nearly as possible in the same state, and maintain the same character, as in Wesley's time. To a very considerable extent he succeeded in effecting this object, and preserved to the Connexion an interesting and instructive religious miscellany.

When Mr. Benson entered on the editorship, he acted differently. He immediately planned a course of important changes, and announced a new series of the periodical, under the title of "The Methodist Magazine;" and although, after the lapse of half a century, the plan which he introduced may appear old and strange, it was, nevertheless, regarded at the time as a great improvement. Unfortunately it was not then the usage to write prefaces to periodicals; we cannot, therefore, as we otherwise might do, assign his reasons for the changes which he introduced. The principal improvement seems to have consisted of

systematic arrangement. He classified the various miscellaneous materials which were available, and presented them under several separate heads, such as "Biography," "Divinity," "The Truth of God defended," &c. Mr. Benson had some personal advantages over his predecessor. He far excelled him in sound scholarship and enlightened judgment. The periodical accordingly prospered in his hands.

Commentaries on the Bible.

In directing attention, in the next place, to that important part of the literature of Methodist origin and character which was produced by individual labour, learning, and enterprise, we are first led to notice a class of works which is justly held to be of the most vital importance to every denomination of Christians, namely, Commentaries on the Scriptures. The production of a work of this sort requires great learning and devoted industry, and involves considerable financial risk. Few persons, therefore, except men of acknowledged erudition and established character, have dared to undertake the production of a Commentary; and, considering the class of men who were likely to enter the Methodist ministry, especially at this period, no disappointment could be felt if there had not been found among them one man capable of such an undertaking; while, on the other hand, the character generally ascribed to the Methodist people of that day, as being ignorant, and not given to reading, would lead to the impression that, if a man competent to the preparation of a Commentary should have been found among the ministers or laymen of Methodism, he would in such a community have met with no encouragement for the publication of so laborious and expensive a work.

Yet, notwithstanding these most unpromising appearances, during the twenty-five years now before us, we find

two Commentaries prepared and published by Methodist preachers, and two others undertaken by two other preachers, and considerably advanced in their publication, and all enjoying a very extensive sale. This fact must be regarded as very extraordinary by all persons, and still more so by those who form their opinions of Methodist preachers and people from current reports, rather than from actual knowledge and personal acquaintance. It becomes our duty to give some account of those voluminous works.

Dr. Coke's Commentary based on that of Dr. Dodd.

The first of these was the Commentary which began to be published by Dr. Coke in 1801, and was completed in 1803 in six quarto volumes. This is usually spoken of as being substantially a republication of Dr. Dodd's Commentary; and Dr. Coke has received some censure for not having acknowledged whence he had derived the larger part of his work. We neither join in the condemnation, nor undertake the defence of the doctor in this matter; but may observe that the *secret* history of Dr. Dodd's compilation would be exceedingly curious, if it were fully written. Enough, however, may be said on the subject to show that much doubt rests on his literary proprietorship in the materials employed. Dr. Dodd had stated on his title-page, that in his work he had inserted "the notes and collections of John Locke, Esq., Daniel Waterland, D.D., the Right Hon. Edward Earl of Clarendon, and other learned persons." The leading part of this statement, however, is erroneous. What are called the notes and collections of Locke, which seem to have formed the basis of the work, were not written by him, but by his contemporary, the learned Dr. Ralph Cudworth, author of "The True Intellectual System of the Universe," whose daughter was married to Sir Francis Masham. She and her husband invited Mr. Locke, who was one of her father's friends, to accept apartments in their country seat at Oates, in Essex.

The materials of which the latter was composed.

He acceded to their wishes, and spent a great part of the last fourteen years of his life in that healthy retirement, and died there in 1704. Locke found in Lady Masham, who inherited the profound talents of her father, "a friend and companion exactly to his heart's wish, being of a contemplative and studious complexion, and particularly inured, from her infancy, to deep and refined speculations in theology, metaphysics, and morality." A descendant of this excellent family came into possession of many valuable manuscripts; and, not having the faculty to discern their great merit, sold them in 1762 to Mr. R. Davis, a bookseller in Piccadilly, who from some circumstances supposed them to have been written by Locke; but the authorities at the British Museum, on comparing the handwriting with that of Locke, subsequently discovered the mistake of Dodd and his publishers. About the same time some manuscript scriptural notes by Dr. Waterland fell into the hands of the booksellers, who, thus possessing what they regarded as a marketable commodity, set about devising the best means of turning it to account. But to do this, it was necessary to have the name of a living celebrity, to unite with those of the eminent dead. Dr. Dodd was then in the height of his popularity, and was selected to carry on the undertaking. With the materials thus provided to his hand, and with the help of Calmet, Houbigant, and of the most eminent commentators of our own country, he produced a work of which Dr. Adam Clarke said that, regarded "as giving the true sense of the Scriptures, (it) is by far the best Comment that has yet appeared in the English language,—by far the best of these works which might be said to be *published by the yard.*" * The design was therefore thus far successful.

When Dr. Coke found the Methodist people in want

* General Preface to Commentary, p. 10.

of a Commentary, and set himself to supply the need, this work, which thirty years before had been very popular, was quite laid aside. The trial and execution of Dr. Dodd for forgery had done more to prevent its circulation, and to cast it into obscurity, than his previous character had done to raise it. Dr. Coke, however, perceived the intrinsic merit of the work, and undoubtedly made it the basis of his own. We do not say that, under the circumstances, the doctor was entitled to regard the work bearing the name of Dodd as lawful plunder, after the manner in which every succeeding lexicographer has regarded the great work of Dr. Johnson; but we do think that, as Dr. Dodd's work was avowedly a compilation of matter, most of which had been written a hundred years before, Dr. Coke was not bound to regard it as he would have done had it been the actual production of Dr. Dodd. The alterations, retrenchments, and additions made by Dr. Coke in this work cost him much labour and anxiety; and when the work was published, it was well received and had an extensive circulation.

Benson's Commentary. Its character.

The next Commentary of which we have to speak, was written by Mr. Joseph Benson. Its publication began in 1811, and was completed in 1818. It formed five quarto volumes. A competent authority thus speaks of it: "An elaborate and very useful Commentary on the sacred Scriptures, which (independently of its practical tendency) possesses the merit of compressing into a comparatively small compass the substance of what the piety and learning of former ages have advanced, in order to facilitate the study of the Bible. Its learned author was particularly distinguished for his critical and exact acquaintance with the Greek Testament." * This eulogium was richly

* HORNE's "Introduction," vol. v., p. 297. Ninth Edition.

merited. Benson's Commentary is throughout highly respectable, and in some parts, particularly the New Testament, eminently excellent. Notwithstanding all that has since been done to promote biblical science, if we were now to be shut up to one Commentary, we know no one that we should prefer to Benson's. It was written at the request of the Conference, published at the Methodist Book-Room, and has gone through several large editions.

Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary.

A third Methodist Commentary commenced during the period now under consideration, was the well known production of Dr. Adam Clarke. Its publication began in 1810, a year before Benson's, and was finished in 1826, eight years after that had been completed. It made eight quarto volumes,—five containing the Old Testament, and three the New. Mr. Horne says of it, "The literary world in general, and biblical students in particular, are greatly indebted to Dr. Clarke for the light he has thrown on many very difficult passages."

The judgment of Dr. Etheridge respecting it.

The eminent author of the recent biography of Dr. Clarke thus speaks of him as a commentator: "Most English Commentaries are reducible to two classes. Some are drily critical, without being popular; others popular, without being critical. Now Dr. Adam Clarke seems to have entertained the idea of producing a work which should combine the advantages of both classes; sufficiently critical to aid the inquiries of the more serious student, and yet sufficiently popular to serve the purposes of general edification. It was his purpose to give a lucid view of the several books of Scripture, as to their dates and authors, their scope and connexion; to expound the text in a manner to adapt itself to the deficiencies of the English reader; to elucidate difficulties in chronology, history, and Oriental manners; to develope the grand doctrines of revelation,

and apply the whole to the great concerns of human salvation and duty.

"To the accomplishment of this task he brought qualifications which proved his designation to it by the providence and grace of God: strong and expansive powers of intellect; an almost universal erudition; a faith of the heart, inwrought by the Holy Spirit whose words he sought to interpret; and a resolute will, which bore him up in body and mind, from year to year, till the great labour should be completed. The seven gifts which, according to Augustine, the true expositor of Scripture must possess,—reverence, piety, science, fortitude, prudence, cleanness of heart, and heavenly wisdom,—the Lord had vouchsafed him in blessed degrees; and by the diligent improvement of them, in this and the other endeavours of his devoted life, these graces increased with his years. He was moved also by a conviction of his responsibility. He heard the voice of God." *

Dr. Clarke laid a solid foundation for the prosecution of this great work by translating the whole Bible into English before he began the Commentary. The Greek portion occupied him eleven months, and the Hebrew and Chaldee about fourteen months; both being accompanied by extensive notes and memoranda. The whole work, in our estimation, passes rather beyond the limits of a Commentary, and almost assumes the character of a biblical Cyclopædia. The amount of knowledge it embodies is greatly diversified, vastly extensive, and exceedingly valuable. The great fault of commentators in general is copying from predecessors. To such an extent is this carried, that we have not unfrequently consulted half-a-dozen Commentaries in succession on a given text, and found four or five of

Character of the work.

* Dr. Etheridge's "Life of Dr. Adam Clarke," p. 320.

them with the same exposition, so nearly in the same words that the common source whence the exposition was derived was at once apparent. Dr. Clarke was neither ignorant of what had been done by preceding writers, nor inattentive to their productions; but he was no servile copyist. On the contrary, his whole work is characterized by strong independence of opinion and judgment. This gave his Commentary many important excellencies, and some few defects. The former are too numerous to cite; we glance at two or three which we regard as of the latter class. His exposition of the *Nachash* in Genesis excited much opposition, and has not made numerous converts. His clear and beautiful exposition of the strict and proper authority of the Septuagint translation, which merits the highest praise, should have led to the adoption of its chronology; but, this department having been confided to his son, most unfortunately the abbreviated system is adopted in the body of the work. The exposition of the texts referring to "the Eternal Sonship" will require notice hereafter. The adoption of Dr. Taylor's "Key to the Epistle to the Romans" as the basis of the Commentary on that book, called forth from the Rev. Henry Moore a sermon on "The Design, Fulness, and Blessedness of the Epistle to the Romans," which was preached before the Conference at Manchester, in 1815, and was an exceedingly eloquent and powerful discourse. Dr. Clarke's Commentary was, from the first day of publication, eminently successful. Ten thousand copies on common and one thousand on fine paper were printed as a first edition. But that number was not sufficient to meet the immediate demand. Successive editions have since been issued, and we doubt not that this great work will continue to edify and enlighten the church to the end of time.

Another Commentary on the Scriptures from the pen of a Methodist preacher appeared during this period. It was the production of Mr. Joseph Sutcliffe, M. A., was published in folio, sold in parts and numbers, and had an extensive circulation. We do not further remark on this important work at present, as it afterward appeared in a greatly improved form, and will, as such, come under consideration in future.

Sutcliffe's Commentary.

The production of, and extensive demand for, four Commentaries of this magnitude in the Methodist Connexion must be regarded as highly creditable to the body, more especially when it is considered that all the other Commentaries published in England during these twenty-five years were, taken together, inferior in magnitude, and, it is pretty certain, sold a fewer number of copies than the aggregate of these four. The Rev. Thomas Scott's Bible, the most popular one of the period, excepting those mentioned above, passed through three editions in the time; but these together did not exceed seven thousand copies. Certainly, in this most important department of religious literature, Methodism at this time did more than any other religious denomination in the kingdom.

Extensive sale of these Commentaries.

We regard the above statement as evidence, at least, that literature was not, as had been alleged, proscribed by Methodists and Methodist preachers. It may, indeed, be said, that the fact of four of the latter having proved themselves able commentators does not prove that the others had similar tastes and abilities. Nor is it intended to convey the idea that these were any sample of the Methodist preachers as a body. But when the extent to which these productions were appreciated and purchased, and the fact that the authors were highly honoured for their

works' sake, are taken into account, it is fair to refer to the whole case as indicating the approval by the Methodist body generally of sound learning, and as evincing their strong desire to avail themselves extensively of useful biblical exposition. Of course the sale of these works was not confined to the Connexion; but it is known to have been very extensive within its limits.

Limited information respecting Methodist literature generally.

We much desire to give our readers some correct idea of the nature and extent of the literary productions published by Methodist authors during this period; but we fear materials for this purpose do not exist: at least, after considerable effort, we have failed to collect anything which can be regarded as an adequate representation. All we can do, therefore, is to notice a few works which have come under our observation, as samples of the Methodist publications of the period.

Works on biblical criticism and exposition by Drs. Clarke and Townley.

Next to Commentaries on the Bible, we regard in order works on scriptural criticism and exposition. In this branch of sacred literature we have no formal treatise of great extent or importance, but numerous contributions of considerable merit and utility. Among them we may notice Dr. Clarke's "Bibliographical Dictionary," in six volumes, published A. D. 1802–1804; which was supplemented, two years afterwards, by his "Bibliographical Miscellany," in two volumes. These volumes contain an immense mass of useful and recondite information on classical and biblical subjects, communicated by a scholar who, it is evident, had "seen and handled" the greater portion of the works which he has so well described. In this "Dictionary" the reader will find a succinct account of Bibles in various languages, and Polyglot Bibles, and especially of Greek Testaments. He enumerates the places where the principal Polyglots were prepared, the persons by whom they were executed,

with a detail of various peculiarities relating to each. His researches respecting the London Polyglot are remarkably ample. This great work of Bishop Walton was published in 1657 under the protectorate of Cromwell, whose patronage is gratefully acknowledged in it. Immediately after the Restoration, the reference to him was withdrawn; and various alterations were made in the preface to the work, which Dr. Clarke particularly specifies. His account of the New Testaments is also learned and useful. But still more valuable, in our estimation, is the same author's Review of Holmes's "Greek Testament and Septuagint" in the "Eclectic." The biblical student will find here some exceedingly valuable observations on the discrepancies which are found to exist in the Hebrew, Samaritan, and Septuagint versions of the Old Testament, with some particularly useful remarks on the authority of the Septuagint, and the importance of an acquaintance with it for a correct knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. Dr. Clarke's learned remarks in the "Eclectic Review" on Barrett's "*Evangelium secundum Matthæum*," and on Graves's "Lectures on the Pentateuch," will be read with advantage.

Near akin to the subjects referred to above are those discussed in two volumes which appeared at this time,—the "Succession of Sacred Literature," by Dr. Clarke, 1807; and "Biblical Anecdotes," by Dr. Townley, in 1813. The first of these gives an account of the writers on sacred subjects, and of their works, from the beginning of time, to the year A.D. 345. It therefore speaks of the writers of the Old Testament books, and of the apocryphal pieces printed with many copies of the Scriptures,—of the Masorites, Onkelos, Philo-Judæus, Jonathan ben Uzziel, and Josephus, and the other Hebrew and Greek writers on cognate subjects to the time of Christ. The New Testament writers

are next considered, and then the fathers who followed, to the middle of the fourth century. The information thus communicated may now be found in expensive and very erudite works, in a much more complete and, we have no doubt, in some cases, more correct form than it is found in this small and unpretending volume. Yet, notwithstanding, this was a most important contribution to the biblical literature of the country fifty years ago. The same may be said of Dr. Townley's volume; only that, in this instance, he himself brought the work to maturity. The "Biblical Anecdotes" were afterward expanded into three goodly volumes, under the title of "Illustrations of Biblical Literature," which appeared in 1821; and of which the "Eclectic Review" said, "They afford a more comprehensive view of the progress of biblical translations, and of the literary and ecclesiastical history of the Holy Scriptures, than is to be found in any other work." * What was really a second edition of the "Biblical Anecdotes," was afterwards published, in a handsome volume, under the title of "An Introduction to the Literary History of the Bible."

Dr. Clarke's translations and new editions of important works.

Dr. Adam Clarke rendered further aid to the cause of biblical knowledge and sound religious learning, by his translations and new editions of important works. Among the former, we mention the Abbé Fleury's "Manners and Customs of the Ancient Israelites." The edition of this volume given to the public by Dr. Clarke, was a corrected form of a translation of it made in the seventeenth century by a Mr. Thomas Bedford, and published under the name of "Ellis Farneworth, M.A." But it was then not well received by the public. Dr. Clarke, however, did not satisfy himself with merely correcting the translation; he

* "Eclectic Review," New Series, vol. xviii., pp. 386–407.

enlarged and enriched the treatise from the fruits of his own learning. The following is the Rev. Hartwell Horne's notice of the work :—"For the third and best edition the public are indebted to Dr. Adam Clarke, who has enlarged the original work with much valuable information from the principal writers on Jewish antiqties." Sturm's "Reflections" were also, for the first time, given in a complete and corrected form to the English reader, by the same indefatigable author. This was a very interesting and useful work, adapted not only to communicate an extensive knowledge of sound philosophy, of natural science, and of the providential government of the world, in a very agreeable manner; but it did all this by means adapted to lead the mind to recognise and adore the great Author and Upholder of all things. As works of this class become obsolete unless they are from time to time imbued with the progress made in general knowledge and scientific discovery; so Dr. Clarke had not merely to translate the work, but to bring it up to the scientific status of his day. Sturm wrote in German; but, as Dr. Clarke could not procure the original and complete edition in that language, he translated from a French version, collating it with the best German copy he could procure. Dr. Clarke also prepared a new edition of Harmer's "Observations on various Passages of Scripture." This work was the production of a pious Dissenter of Norwich, and was first published in 1764 in two volumes, to which two more volumes were added in 1784. The object of the work was to illustrate Holy Scripture by the selection of apposite passages from the recorded narratives of voyages and travels to the eastern countries. This was a kind of work also which required the frequent incorporation of fresh matter, as the lands of the Bible were more fully explored. Much additional

information had been procured in this manner in the forty years which elapsed from the first publication of the work to the issue of Dr. Clarke's edition in 1816. Of this the editor fully availed himself, and sent forth what is admitted by every authority to be the best edition of the work. Dr. Clarke also corrected a new edition of Shuckford's "Connexion of the Sacred and Profane History of the World."

Mr. Thomas Wood, another Methodist preacher, produced an important work in 1813, entitled, "The Mosaic Creation illustrated by Discoveries and Experiments derived from the present enlightened State of Science: to which is prefixed the Cosmogony of the Ancients. With Reflections intended to promote vital and practical Religion." This volume fully redeemed the promise given in its title-page. Of the treatise it has been said, "This is an elaborate illustration of the first chapter of Genesis. To the work is prefixed a view of the cosmogony of the ancients, which exhibits considerable research. The religious improvements are both natural and scriptural; the doctrine of the Trinity is here scripturally defended, and its authorities are clearly adduced." These works together formed a respectable contribution from the Methodist people toward the promotion of biblical science, at a period when the subject was not so popular, nor so generally studied, as it has been in more recent times.

Publications in defence of the doctrines of Scripture.

The great doctrines of Christianity were defended and illustrated both from the evidence of Scripture and by philosophical argument, in works which, if not very numerous, took a highly respectable position amongst writings of their class. Benson's replies to Priestley merit distinguished notice here, both for their spirit, conclusiveness, and conciseness. They were, "Remarks on Dr. Priestley's System of Materialism and Necessity;" "A scriptural Essay toward

the Proof of an immortal Spirit in Man;" "A rational Vindication of the Catholic Faith. Being the First Part of a Vindication of Christ's Divinity;" "Socinianism Unscriptural: or, The Prophets and Apostles vindicated from the Charge of holding the Doctrine of Christ's mere Humanity: being the Second Part of a Vindication of His Divinity." The two last-mentioned works were begun by the Rev. John Fletcher, of Madeley; but, being left unfinished at his death, they were, at the request of Wesley, revised and finished by Mr. Benson. Mr. Daniel Isaac's "Essay on Universal Restoration," in confutation of Mr. Vidler, has been already mentioned in the History, and may here be named again with commendation, as scriptural and conclusive. Mr. Benson passed a high eulogium on it; and Dr. Clarke pronounced it to be "unanswerable." Nor must we omit to mention the productions of the lay Methodist author of the middle age of Methodism, Samuel Drew, M.A. His principal works, already mentioned, are, "Remarks on Paine's Age of Reason;" "An Essay on the Immateriality and Immortality of the human Soul, founded solely on physical and rational Principles;" and, "An Essay on the Identity and general Resurrection of the human Body."

Important circulation of tracts and pamphlets having a similar tendency.

These works, with others of a similar tendency, did much to uphold the cause of truth and righteousness against the errors and pride of philosophy and science, falsely so called, and to maintain the truth as it is revealed in Holy Scripture. But they form a very small portion of what the Methodist preachers and people contributed during the period to this important purpose. Formal treatises in support of the truth, and in opposition to error, are sometimes absolutely necessary and very useful. It is, however, but seldom that an opposer of the

truth assumes such colossal proportions as to render such a mode of defence necessary, or that the circumstances of the people enable them to purchase large and expensive works of this character. This was certainly not the case generally with the Methodists of this period; and consequently the most effectual way of repressing error, and extending the influence of scriptural religion, was by tracts and pamphlets. And it is no exaggeration to say that these, written generally with correctness and ability, literally swarmed from the press. The sermons of Benson, Bunting, Watson, Clarke, Bradburn, Moore, and others, with pamphlets in countless numbers, contributed very greatly to extend knowledge and religion.

Works in defence of Methodism.

One important portion of this sort of literature was directed to the defence of Methodism. It was the sect everywhere spoken against, and every hand seemed raised to assail it. Nor were its children backward to meet the enemy in the gate, and to give to every one that asked them a reason of their hope. The "Apology for the People called Methodists," by Joseph Benson, was a masterly production of this kind, on the plan of the Apologies of the early Fathers. The same author's Letters in reply to Tatham are also excellent; and Samuel Drew's reply to Polwhele's "Anecdotes of Methodism" merits honourable mention in this category. But the greater number of the pieces directed to this object were small, and of temporary interest, passing away with the opposition which gave them birth.

History.

We might refer to a respectable, and not a very limited, number of works, produced by Methodist authors, of a general and historical character; such as, Dr. Coke's "History of the West Indies;" Martindale's "Dictionary of the Bible;" Mr. James Wood's work on the same subject;

Atmore's "Memorials," containing biographical sketches of the first race of Methodist preachers; Drew's "History of Cornwall;" Myles's "Chronological History of Methodism," and many others: but our limits forbid further enumeration. We proceed finally to direct attention to a class of works which has exercised a most important influence on the Methodist Connexion, and, through it, on the present age: we mean those on Methodist biography, autobiography, and religious experience. They were to a great extent a creation of Methodism, and may not unsuitably be termed "the Methodist school of biography." The peculiar and distinctive feature of it is the prominence given to what we may venture to call the biography of the soul. In general biography you have a portraiture of the character, life, and actions of persons, as they were seen by their fellows, passing on the highway of life. Their conduct is considered as submitted to the public eye, and judged of accordingly. In Methodist biography, although a fair measure of attention may be paid to this portion of the work, the principal thing considered is the state of the spirit, and the progress of an inward and spiritual life. In other words, while the progress of the subject from youth to age, his conduct as a member of a family, and as a citizen of the world, are made the principal topics in general biography, here the great object is to exhibit the means by which the fallen, depraved, and guilty spirit was awakened to a sense of its danger, and, by faith in Christ, translated into the kingdom of the Son of God; and, thenceforward, to depict the life of the spirit as a member of the family of God, and a denizen of heaven.

Works on religious biography and spiritual experience.

The number of works of this kind which have been published in every period of Methodist history, is immense.

Coke and Moore's "Life of Wesley;" Benson's "Life of Fletcher;" the "Experience of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers;" the "Life and Labours of John Valton;" the "Life of the Rev. Peard Dickenson;" and a hundred others, might be mentioned. We have said, we regard this portion of Methodist literature as peculiarly important; we esteem it, in fact, as the clearest, brightest, and best public proof of the continued existence of spiritual life among us; and as affording, in its collective form, important guidance and defence to every sincere soul athirst for salvation. In this department of literature, Methodism is rich. The Methodists of the present day can review the convictions, struggles, self-denials, and spiritual exercises of the early preachers and the Methodists of former ages, and see through what opposition and conflict they endured hardness as good soldiers. They can thus consider the godly conversation of their predecessors in the way, and copy their example, that they may share the glory they have realized.

Conclusion.

On a careful and candid review of the whole case, although convinced that the Methodist people have no more right than they have inclination to pride themselves on being a literary or learned people, we think that they have reason to be grateful to the great Head of the church that He has from the beginning raised up among them a continued succession of men, not only wise to win souls by their Gospel ministrations, but who have also been endued with ability to repel error in its most insidious forms, to uphold the truth against all opposition, and, by the Divine blessing, to make a fair contribution toward the religious, moral, and intellectual enlightenment of the human family.

CHAPTER IV.

THE METHODISM OF THE MIDDLE AGE: ITS RELATION TO THE CHURCH AND THE NATION.

OBJECT of the Chapter—Methodism retained its spiritual Character and evangelizing Energy—Proofs of this Fact—Methodism continued to increase in Numbers and Influence—Unfavourable State of the Country—Remarkable Increase—The Missions—Developement of Methodism—In the Administration of the Sacraments—Voluntary Humility of Methodist Preachers—Developement in respect of the lay Element—The Rights of the Laity not fully ascertained—Improvement devised—State of the Connexion at the Close of the Middle Age—Relation of Methodism to the Established Church—The continued Union of Methodism with the Church impossible—Nor would such Union have been beneficial—The separate Existence of Methodism advantageous to the Church—Special Proofs of this—The Relation of Methodism to the Nation—The Influence salutary in its Nature—Its Extent—Methodist Loyalty—Special Instances in the West Indies and Ireland—Methodism not opposed to Liberty—Nor friendly to a ruling Democracy in Church or State—Benevolent and philanthropic Exertions—Earnest Protestantism of Methodism—Methodism the greatest Defence against Popery—Conclusion.

Object of the chapter.

THE circumstances and condition of Methodism at the death of Wesley, and its progress during the ensuing twenty-five years, have passed under our careful review. The troubles which followed the removal of the founder of the Connexion from the scene of his earthly labour, respecting both the sacraments and the polity of the Connexion, have been thoroughly considered; the progress and general history of the body, from 1791 to 1816, have, as far as our limits allowed, been succinctly detailed. The prominent features of the case having been thus brought under special notice, we are prepared to form a judgment of the Meth-

odism of this period. To what issue are we then brought? What is the character of the Methodism of this period? We desire nothing more, in the closing pages of this volume, than to elicit a sound, reasonable, and religious reply to these questions.

As means to the formation of a correct judgment on this subject, it will be necessary to direct attention to some prominent features exhibited in the progress and developement of the body, and to survey more particularly the several phases of its character. In doing this, we shall not wholly confine ourselves to a consideration of Methodism as an isolated institution, but regard it also in its relation to the Established Church and the nation generally.

Methodism retained its spiritual character and evangelizing energy.

The first point to which we invite attention is this: that Methodism, to the end of the period under consideration, retained its spirituality and power, and remained an instrument of evangelization.

This was, indeed, its original and principal vocation; a fact which was abundantly demonstrated in the first volume of this work. Wesley was learned, conscientious, zealous, when making efforts for the moral and religious improvement of the young men at Oxford; and, afterward, when he went to preach the Gospel to the colonists and Indians in Georgia. But it was not until he learned the way of justification by faith alone, from his conversation with Peter Böhler, and was enabled to realize this blessed truth in his own experience, that he became the honoured instrument in turning sinners "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." But, having believed with his heart unto righteousness, he preached Christ crucified, as the power of God unto salvation, with zeal and success. And thenceforth, to the end of his days, the Methodist

preachers were acknowledged, even by their bitterest enemies, to be eminently useful in the conversion of the most abandoned and degraded sinners. Their efforts had, indeed, "roused a slumbering church and nation to a sense of God and religion." Those men who tell us that Methodism had then accomplished her providential work, and consequently ought to have fallen back into the bosom of the Establishment, should carefully consider whether it still continued to prosecute the same course of evangelical usefulness, or turned aside to some other way. Unfortunately, the latter has not been an untrodden path. It is painful to contemplate the case of an individual who, having begun a course of godliness, has turned again to the pleasures of the world and sin. But it is infinitely more so to watch the backsliding of a church. Yet, how often has this melancholy spectacle been seen in every age of the world! Churches full of godly truth, zeal, and usefulness, through which the saving power of the Gospel had been communicated to thousands of persons, have departed from the faith, and become mere receptacles of empty forms and superstitious ceremonies, or, on the other hand, have learned to idolize human reason, and at length have denied the Lord that bought them. Throughout this period Methodism still retained its spiritual power and evangelical energy. Proofs of this fact have been abundantly furnished in the preceding pages. We know not what to add to the evidence, undesigned and spontaneous as it is, which a simple record of events has thus supplied. Does it prove the evangelical character of a church, that it raises men from the lowest deeps of ignorance and sin, to be not only consistent Christians, but able ministers of the New Covenant?—while, at the same time, it reaches men of giant intellect and exalted mental powers, and induces

Proofs of this fact.

them to renounce all the fascinations of wealth and fame, and submit to be humble ministers of the cross of Christ? Methodism bore these marks. Does it show the spiritual and evangelical character of a religious body, that it offers to its members motives to piety, and consolations of religion, which lead, sustain, and animate them through all the trials and dangers of this sublunary course, and enable them to die happy in the faith and love of Jesus, exulting to depart from earth, that they may be with Christ, which is far better? Methodism exerted this influence in every part of the land, and through all classes of society, from the brightest specimens of Britain's aristocracy to the meanest and lowest of the people. Would it be regarded as conclusive evidence of retaining a truly scriptural character, that a church was regularly and uniformly made the instrument of leading a considerable number, out of those who were brought under the influence of the ministry, to the experience of saving faith in Christ, and the happy enjoyment of pardoning and renewing grace? Methodism continued to do all this; and in no period of its history did the conversion of sinners, the character of its ministers, and the happy and triumphant death of its people, more fully display the continued presence and saving power of Christ, than in the period now under review.

Methodism continued to increase in numbers and influence.

Another consideration of importance is brought before us, in the continued progress of the Methodist body in numbers and influence at home and abroad. We at once admit, that if these had been secured by any abandonment of principle, by any adaptation of the economy of the body to worldly policy, or by any sacrifice of its spirituality, this progress would afford no proof of its continued evangelical character. But we have seen that its religious

efficiency was maintained; and it is equally certain that the principles and economy of the Connexion had been preserved inviolate. Indeed, this was the occasion of the far greater portion of the conflict which the Methodist preachers and people of that day were called upon to maintain, and of the persecution which they submitted to suffer. If they had been willing to succumb to the power of the great, or the clamour of the many;—if, indeed, those who directed the affairs of Methodism at this time would have consented to forego their principles, and to depart from the practice and spirit of Wesley;—they might have avoided much inconvenience, and even suffering, and have secured many worldly advantages. They did neither; but, as far as was possible, in the altered circumstances which his death produced, steadily adhered to the spiritual and evangelical course which the founder of Methodism had marked out.

Yet, notwithstanding this fidelity to sound principles, Methodism continued to increase in numbers and influence throughout the home work and the Mission Stations. We cannot estimate the importance of this fact, unless we refer to the state of the country and of Methodism during this period. Casual reference has more than once been made to these topics in the course of the history; but it is necessary that, in this *résumé*, it should be repeated. Never before, in the modern history of Europe, did any country present such an arena of conflict between light and darkness, revealed truth and infidel error, as did Britain during this time. When Wesley died, royalty was in abeyance in France, and all the external forms of religion had been virtually destroyed; while it was well known that a deep and deadly current of infidelity was rolling on, sapping the foundations of civil and political society, and

Unfavourable state of the country.

working ruin to the existence of religion. A short time sufficed to complete the political, social, and religious destruction which had thus commenced in that unhappy country: the royal family, the nobility, the church, the very form, name, and appearance of religion, were swept away in a torrent of blood; and anarchy and infidelity united their malign influences to blast and destroy all that was venerable in the state, or sacred in the land.

In the first movements and successes of this revolution many Englishmen sympathized to a great extent. Nor did its carnage and monstrous cruelty entirely destroy this feeling, at least for some time. These circumstances exercised a fearful influence on the faith and morals of England; and Methodism, at the outset of the period now under consideration, had to bear up against this unusual and baneful excitement. Nor must it be forgotten, as shown at large at the beginning of this volume, that Methodism itself was ill prepared for such a struggle. It had not been fairly wrought into a system; its organization was neither complete, nor free from defects. Yet, even in those circumstances, it prospered. And we can scarcely find in any religious body a more steady, more progressive, or larger increase. That, in twenty-five years, the number of Methodists in the British islands should have trebled, is a most remarkable fact. The statement thus tersely put conveys but a very imperfect idea of the actual result of which we speak. These members required and obtained a corresponding increase in the number of ministers and chapels. The former, indeed, multiplied in proportion more rapidly than the members; and we incline to the opinion, that this is true also in respect of the chapels. These measures required a very large investment of capital. At the close of the period, therefore, we feel bound to recognise

Remarkable increase.

Methodism as one of the great institutions of the nation.

The *status* which the Missions had obtained, also greatly contributed to increase the influence of Methodism. The long and laborious efforts that had been carried on in the West Indies had brought the Methodist preachers so frequently into contact with the colonial governments, as well as with the imperial authority, that the work was recognised with honour at home and abroad. More recent enterprises in Africa and Asia were also, from their public and prominent action, under the eye of all observers, and contributed to render the Connexion better known and more highly appreciated. The Missions.

But Methodism had not only increased since the death of Wesley, it had largely developed its ecclesiastical arrangements and church character. The following facts will make this obvious :— Developement of Methodism

The sacraments were now administered regularly in Methodist chapels by Methodist preachers. The members of Society were therefore favoured with all the ordinances of a Christian church; they had the word of God faithfully preached, and the sacraments duly administered; and were, through the Divine blessing on these means, edified and multiplied. There are some persons who still persist in speaking of this change as a wide and rebellious departure from the precepts and practice of Wesley. It is vain to argue with obstinate cavillers, or to attempt to remove predetermined conclusions. Every candid person will readily admit that we have given a strictly proper designation to these changes, when we call them a developement of Wesleyan Methodism. It is true Wesley did not desire his preachers, whom at first he regarded merely as laymen, to administer the sacraments; but it is equally true, that years before his death he had appointed some of them for

this special duty, not only in America, but also in Scotland and in England. Why was this? For what purpose were these arrangements made, at least in respect of England, and yet not acted on, but held in abeyance, as means for ulterior action when required? This question, which seems to have presented inextricable difficulties to many persons, admits of a very ready and simple solution. Wesley undoubtedly desired the Methodist preachers and people, at least during his life, to remain in strict union with the National Church, and generally to receive the sacraments from the hands of the established clergy. But there was one object which always held paramount sway in his mind, and exercised an influence on his judgment superior to every other: this was the religious interests of the people to whom the providence of God had made him a spiritual father. That these interests might be protected in every possible emergency, Wesley ordained Messrs. Mather, Rankin, and Moore presbyters for England. And that we have accurately apprehended his design in this act, will be apparent from the fact, that, having thus ordained these preachers, he solemnly charged them "that, according to his example, they should continue united to the Established Church, *so far as the blessed work in which they were engaged would permit:*"—words which fully sustain the view we have taken, namely, that attention to the religious necessities of this "blessed work" was to be held as their first duty. That the ministration of the sacraments under certain possible contingencies was regarded by him as essential to those interests, he clearly showed by appointing persons to perform this duty, when the necessity arose.

This necessity did arise. The Methodist people, in many places, became so numerous, that the churches could

In the administration of the sacraments.

not have contained them, even if they had been reserved for their special accommodation. The conduct of the clergy generally, and the judgment and feelings of the Methodist people, offered equal and insuperable difficulties; so that, the necessity which Wesley had provided for having arisen, having indeed been struggled against as long and even longer than was either wise or safe, the point was conceded, and the sacraments were administered by the Methodist preachers. The arrangements which led to this conclusion were, therefore, as we have said, a developement of Wesleyan Methodism,—a consummation for which ample provision had been made by the founder himself.

It may, indeed, be urged, that the object was not accomplished precisely in the way that the arrangements of Wesley had indicated. He ordained preachers as presbyters, and one of them as a superintendent or bishop; and, for some time toward the close of life, he seems to have entertained a design of introducing into Methodism a modified form of episcopacy, in case the appointment and recognition of a regular ministry should become inevitable. But he did not live long enough to learn, that, when this time did arrive, the plan could not be carried into effect in his way without destroying the equality, unity, and brotherhood of the Methodist preachers. The appointment of bishops was canvassed for some years in various forms, and under every aspect of the question, and was found to be not only opposed to the judgment of a large majority of the body, but otherwise impracticable.

Nor did this departure from Wesley's ideal plan at all affect the issue. Under any circumstances, the sacraments would have been administered by Methodist preachers with no higher authority than the call of God and the church, and the designation which the founder of Methodism had

bequeathed to them; and this they had. Whether they were called deacons, presbyters, and bishops, or preachers on trial, superintendents, and chairmen of Districts, could make no difference whatever in their authority to perform religious or ecclesiastical acts. Ample reasons have been already given for regarding a Methodist preacher, when fully received into the Connexion, as a validly appointed Christian minister; it is, therefore, unnecessary to argue that question here; and it is undeniable, that the adoption of this form of ministerial appointment at that time was the most modest and inoffensive course which could have been taken, whilst it did not in any way derogate from the scriptural character of the ministry.

But, while we fully maintain these positions, we must not be understood as setting aside the formal ordination of men, by the imposition of hands, to the work and office of the Christian ministry. On the contrary, when this is done in a simple, unostentatious, and religious manner, we regard it as very useful and, indeed, important; but we do not regard it as so essential in all cases, that a person received by the church and its ministers in another way, cannot be, really and truly, a Christian minister.

We believe that many of the Methodist preachers of the period under consideration entertained the opinions just expressed; that they regarded the preachers, received as they then were, as scriptural ministers, fully authorized to administer the sacraments, to exercise complete ministerial authority, and to perform all ministerial acts. Yet we are strongly persuaded that they, at the same time, believed that ordination by the imposition of hands was not only scriptural and reasonable, but a very desirable mode of designating ministers to the sacred office.

Are we asked, "Why, then, was this form of ordination

not adopted?" We reply, Because, in the then divided sentiments of Methodist preachers and people, it was feared that such a step would have had an injurious effect. The Conference, while conceding to the claims of the people all that in its belief could be reasonably or scripturally demanded, claimed for its members all that was necessary to the performance of the duties of their office as ministers of Christ; and, having done this, delayed the adoption of reasonable and proper usages, forms, and names, while any danger existed that the introduction of these would be productive of serious division of opinion, or be fraught with other injurious consequences. For this reason the introduction of this ceremony was postponed, and the preachers declined to adopt the term "minister," contenting themselves with the modest term of "preacher of the Gospel," refusing, also, to call each other "reverend," while they freely applied the appellation to other ministers.

Voluntary humility of Methodist preachers.

The developement of which we have spoken, was carried so far as to constitute Methodism a church, and its preachers truly scriptural Christian ministers; but it was not carried far enough to give them the apparent position before the world which they really occupied, nor to invest them with the name and title to which they had a just claim. And this voluntary abandonment of their just rights, this contented occupancy of an apparently inferior position in comparison with other ministers, was persevered in for more than twenty years by those who have often in our day been described as ambitious men, grasping at power, and eager and anxious to monopolize elevation and distinction! We have scarcely in the records of the church another instance of equal humility and self-denial practised on so large a scale.

Before passing from the consideration of the develope-

Developement in respect of the lay element.

ment of Methodism, we may briefly allude to its operation in regard to the lay element, and its influence in the Methodist Societies. A very singular alteration took place in this respect during the life of Wesley, although it was at that time scarcely recognised. When the founder of Methodism commenced his itinerant labours, and for a long time afterwards, himself and the other ordained ministers of the Established Church were the only persons recognised as the clergy. The preachers were lay preachers, in common with the local preachers, leaders, and people. In the progress of time, however, although he never placed the Methodist preachers on a level with clergymen, he challenged for them all the rights of Christian pastors, and called on the people to regard them as such. This anomaly was a prominent element in the struggle which took place in the Connexion after the death of Wesley. By slow but steady progress, the preachers stood before the church and the world as Christian ministers, and, as such, occupied a position distinct from the laity.

The question then arose, "What are the scriptural rights of the laity, and by what means are they to be secured?" This question was not, indeed, formally propounded; but it in substance formed a prominent element in the troubles which followed the death of Wesley for at least seven years. If it had been fairly considered, its solution would possibly have hastened the developement which it took a long time to bring about; but instead of thus raising this question, an effort was made by the trustees to lay hold of the power to appoint preachers to the Methodist chapels, or, at least, to exercise a *veto* on their appointment. This attempt to encroach on the scriptural rights of the pastorate was, after a long and earnest struggle, decided in a manner which secured to Methodist preachers the power necessary to

enable them to discharge the functions of Christian ministers.

The rights of the laity not fully ascertained.

But this decision did not exactly define the strict and proper rights and influence of the laity in a Christian church. Much less did it profess to award these rights to the laity of that day. The local preachers, leaders, and stewards had the full amount of power pertaining to their respective offices secured to them; and as the principal duties of the office-bearers in Methodism are strictly religious, and not political or legislative, the grand work of the body was carried on with vigour and success. But there still existed an evident deficiency. The scriptural idea of a church is evidently a unity of clergy and laity working together in harmonious union for the general good, with an ultimate authority and responsibility resting in the ministry. The decisions of 1795 and 1797, while securing the Methodist ministry in the possession of this right, and affording the laity a wide range of religious usefulness and influence, did not give the latter the means of co-operating with the ministry in the general affairs of the Connexion, and of influencing its legislation, to the extent that the circumstances of the church and the teaching of holy Scripture required.

This want was felt, and its inconveniences were deplored, by many, both of the preachers and laymen; but a remedy was not discovered which appeared to offer a satisfactory and practicable removal of the defect. And, therefore, throughout the period of Methodist history now under consideration, the progress of the body, although religiously great, was not all that could be desired; and as the interests of Methodism acquired magnitude, and its action began to be felt throughout the world, the necessity of a full and more formal co-operation of the laity became from

year to year increasingly essential to the healthy working and continued progress of the system. Yet things remained substantially in the same state in which they had been placed in 1797, until towards the end of the time now under consideration, when it appears to have entered into the mind of Mr. Bunting, that the case might be met by the appointment of mixed committees, composed of an equal number of preachers and laymen, which should exercise special oversight over every department of the work, and initiate such improvements, from time to time respectively, as might seem to be required.

Improvement devised.

The plan was not brought into operation at that point of Methodist history with which the present volume closes; but it was just introduced in the formation of the Missionary Society, and, being found to work with excellent effect, was afterward carried into every part of the economy. We will not anticipate the discussion of the important results which followed this movement, and other means afterward adopted, any farther than to express an opinion, that they were essential to the continued enlargement and developement of the body. There never could have been such a celebration of the Centenary of Methodism, with such results, as that which took place in 1839, without the previous introduction of more official intercourse between the principal laymen and preachers, and a larger infusion of the lay element into the deliberations and decisions of the body in respect of its general affairs.

State of the Connexion at the close of the middle age.

The result of our inquiries is, therefore, that Methodism during this whole period was in a state of developement. Adhering to all the great principles which guided Wesley in his work, the Connexion had defined and established the scriptural position of the pastorate, and charged it, in addition to the proclamation of the Gospel, with the

administration of the sacraments, and thus put itself before the world as a scriptural church. But it had not placed either the preachers or the laymen, to the fullest extent, in their proper position. The former had not fully assumed the title or *status* of Christian ministers, and were in several respects without the accessories which ought to belong to the clergy of a great and influential section of the church universal; whilst the laymen had not been introduced by suitable organization into such official influence as all the interests of the church required them to exercise. But, notwithstanding these defects of form, we perceive that the body went onward in its aggression on ignorance and sin, and in building up believers in the faith of Christ, with unexampled energy, devotedness, and success.

We have now to consider the relation of Methodism, thus constituted and operating, to the Church and the nation.

Relation of Methodism to the Established Church.

In proceeding to inquire into the relation which Methodism, at the close of its middle age, bore to the Established Church, we of course recognise the facts which have been previously mentioned; namely, that Wesley began his evangelical labours with the hope and desire of reviving religion within the Establishment; that he prosecuted his work; gathered the fruits of his ministry into Society; sought the aid of lay preachers; built chapels; and even introduced a financial organization for the purpose of sustaining these preachers; still in the hope that all these results would ultimately be recognised by the national ecclesiastical authorities, and be retained as a leaven of righteousness within the pale of the Establishment. Events occurred in his subsequent history, and especially toward the end of his life, which greatly damped these hopes.

And as he regarded the maintenance of the work of God to be a primary duty, he, as before observed, made provision for an emergency which to him seemed looming in the distance, by ordaining preachers for England, as he had previously done for America and Scotland.

What Wesley dreaded actually took place. The character of the clergy, and their conduct toward the Methodists, together with the views and feelings toward the National Church which extensively obtained amongst the Methodist people, made it fully apparent, after the lapse of some years, that no effective religious union could be maintained between them; so that, although many amongst both the preachers and the people earnestly desired to remain in connexion with the Establishment, the current in the opposite direction was so strong, and so broad, that it became irresistible, and compelled provision to be made for supplying the Methodist Societies with all Christian ordinances by their own preachers.

The continued union of Methodism with the Church impossible.

This was regarded at the time, and is still spoken of by many, as a great evil. Some even of those who fully admit the necessity of the separation which took place deeply lament it, and labour much to discover who was really to blame for provoking such a catastrophe. We adhere to the opinion previously expressed, that the continued existence of the Methodist Connexion as a separate and independent religious body was the Divine purpose in raising it up, and that no efforts of any parties would have succeeded in frustrating that design. But, waiving this, let us calmly inquire whether that consummation, of which some speak so earnestly, was really to be desired. It is assumed as an undeniable truth, that the Methodist Societies could not have been maintained in continued union with the Church, unless they had been placed to a considerable extent under

the direction of the national clergy. Whatever Wesley might have hoped in the early part of his career, experience has given to this postulate the authority of established fact.

Nor would such union have been beneficial.

Then we ask any evangelical Christian, however strongly attached to the Episcopal Church, whether he really believes that if in 1795 the Conference, instead of granting the sacraments to their people through the preachers, had made arrangements by which the Societies throughout the land should be placed under the influence of the established clergy to such an extent as to secure their continued union with the National Church, this measure would have been more promotive of real religion throughout the country than the course which was taken. Let the character of the clergy of that day be fairly considered, and let any candid Christian say whether such a course would have been the means of raising up in the Church a greater aggregate of piety, evangelizing energy, and religious power, in the year 1816, than the Church and the Methodist body together possessed at that period. We do not wish to offend, by any minute canvass of the question; but to us it seems self-evident that, instead of promoting the religion of the country, such a course would have struck the heaviest blow, and presented the greatest discouragement to it, that ever was inflicted.

The separate existence of Methodism advantageous to the Church.

We are prepared to go further than this, and to maintain that the separate and independent existence of Methodism has afforded greater aid to the Establishment than any union of Methodism with it could have given. In order to justify this opinion, we must direct attention to two or three particulars.

Let it then be observed, in the first place, that, if Methodism exists in separation from the Established Church, it is

not constitutionally hostile to it. The Methodists believe the same doctrines, they have not, generally speaking, any conscientious repugnance to its ritual, they assert no principle opposed to that of a National Establishment, and, as a body, entertain no feeling towards the Established Church but that of friendly regard. If the Church has been assailed, Methodism has never been found in alliance with the assailants. With that kind of Dissent which would blot the National Church from the institutions of our country, or deprive it of its revenues, Methodism has never evinced sympathy. Secondly, the independent position of Methodism gives value to its opinions and support. This is no unimportant consideration. Let the circumstances of the time now under review be taken into account,—the fearful prevalence of infidelity; the extent of political dissent; the vantage ground on which those stood who attacked a church institution endowed by the state; and then let the importance of the favourable judgment and friendly aid of a body so numerous as the Methodists be fairly weighed. Nor is this mere hypothesis. This aid has been often given, and has been sometimes suitably acknowledged. Further, the Methodist body has helped the Established Church in a peculiar, we might almost say a vicarious, way.

Special proofs of this.

Methodism has been assailed,—several times furiously and desperately assailed; has been agitated and convulsed by disaffection and aggression. Superficial observers may attribute these conflicts to faults in the system, or in its administration: we will not now deny that, to some extent, there may have been both; but we maintain that the intensity and extent of these assaults bear no proportion even to the faults which have been alleged; while they stand connected with circumstances which cast important light on some of the real causes of the aggression. When has there

been a widely spread revolutionary mania affecting Europe, without its nearly synchronizing with a violent assault on Methodism? Let the reader look over the records of the Connexion, in comparison with those of England and the neighbouring nations, from the year 1790 to the present time; and he will find this statement remarkably verified. The solution of this strange problem is simple and easy. When the public mind is in a sound and healthy state, discipline can be exercised, and suitable arrangements in Methodism be made, without stir or confusion. But when the public mind is deeply imbued with a feverish and revolutionary opposition to authority, then just and proper discipline is resisted with effect, if not with success. And this resistance has more than once manifestly acquired intensity and popular support from a deep-rooted opposition to the institution and authority of the Christian ministry, which has been excited and strengthened by the circumstances of the times. In this manner Methodism has frequently sustained a storm of popular fury, which, if it had not been spent on the Connexion, would have fallen with fearful effect on the Established Church. Dissenting churches are too isolated and local to present a sufficient object of attack; but Methodism, from its connexional character, its maintenance of ministerial authority, its opposition to all low, licentious, levelling political notions, presents itself as a natural object of assault, whenever the public mind is imbued with a democratic frenzy. It has thus sustained the great principles of truth and order, and preserved the Church of England from much aggression which it would otherwise have had to endure. What, if the innumerable public meetings, speeches, placards, appeals of the press, and other violent efforts which we have seen directed against

Methodism in successive agitations, had been all brought to bear immediately on the ministers, tithes, and institutions of the Established Church? How would such aggressions have been resisted? We well know a certain locality, in which the Methodist people were peculiarly harassed and disturbed during one of these agitations, where a clergyman, otherwise highly respectable, greatly sympathized with the aggressors, and in various ways gave them tacit encouragement. The storm was sustained, passed away, and was by mere spectators almost forgotten; when this clergyman, speaking to a Methodist gentleman, observed, "I am much surprised and grieved to perceive the change that has come over the people in this parish during the past few years. When I came here to reside, and for years afterward, I was treated with marked respect by all, even the poorest of the people; and those who never attended church, seemed pleased to show some sign of deference to the minister: but now I find these classes almost uniformly regard me rather as an object of aversion than of respect." The Methodist asked, "Have you any idea of the cause of this change?" The clergyman declared he had not, and much wished to know whether his acquaintance could give him any information respecting it. "Yes, Sir," said the Methodist, "I can tell you. That violent aggression on the peace and order of the Methodist Societies with which you sympathized some time since, has produced the effects which you lament. That aggression, Sir, was not made merely on a rule or an act of the Conference, as you and many others seemed to suppose, but on the position and authority of the Christian ministry. And when one section of Christian ministers are libelled and lampooned so extensively that the censures and jests are retailed in the cottages of the poor, and by the lips of children, the

end aimed at is in some degree attained,—the Christian ministry is damaged, and sinks in public estimation. Under such aggressive influences, distinction is not made between one denomination and another, but the whole order suffers." The clergyman considered the case, looked over the circumstances in this aspect, and candidly admitted that he believed the statement he had just heard was correct. If it were possible for one of these furious aggressions to hurl Methodism from existence, the Church of England would not much longer remain a national institution.

We regard Methodism, therefore, as holding a friendly and respectful bearing toward the Establishment, and as not only contributing a wholesome stimulus to her internal piety and activity, but as forming an outlying army of defence, prepared to receive the first attack of every aggressor; and, as such, we hold that it has a claim to be regarded in return with like friendliness and respect.

But it will probably be urged in reply that the Methodism of this period cannot, on the acknowledged principles of the National Establishment, be regarded as a Christian church, inasmuch as, in addition to the absence of episcopal ordination, it was actually destitute of the sacraments, an admitted essential in the constitution of the Christian system. This allegation, however, is hardly correct. The members of the Methodist Society in London had the sacraments always regularly administered to them, and this was frequently the case in some other places. But not to dwell on this point, we beg leave to doubt the wisdom of members of the Church of England who urge this objection. To what does it amount? The terms of her own Article on the subject are these: "The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the

pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." *

Now it is objected that, although in a few places the sacraments were administered to the Methodist Societies, this was not uniformly the case, and therefore they cannot be recognised as forming a Christian church. But has it never occurred to persons so objecting, to ask whether at this very time the other branch of the requirement was uniformly found in the Church of England? Was "the pure word of God preached" in all the churches of the land during this period? No enlightened Churchman will maintain this. It is matter of history, that while in very, very many places scarcely anything worthy the name of Christian doctrine was preached, in others the errors of Arianism were proclaimed, and the atonement of the Saviour denied. We do not urge these melancholy facts for the purpose of denying the church character of the Establishment; we do not believe the argument can be justly pressed to this extent. And on the same principle we repel the objection to the scriptural position of the Methodist Connexion on the ground of the sacraments not having been always generally administered.

The relation of Methodism to the nation.

The influence salutary in its nature.

Having shown that Methodism holds a friendly and salutary relation to the Church, we proceed to consider its position in respect of the nation. And here we think it will be equally easy to show that Methodism has exercised a very sound and healthy influence on the public mind. We refer at the outset to the divinely established principle, that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people;" and challenge for Methodism the high honour of having originated and successfully carried

* Article xix.

out a great national reformation of religion and morals. Not to mention now its reflex influence on the Church and other Christian denominations, let us call attention to the direct and immediate results of Methodist teaching and discipline.

Its extent.

At the beginning of the period now under review, there were in the British Islands 71,668 accredited members in the several Methodist Societies. It may be regarded as a very moderate calculation when we suppose three times as many besides attending their worship, and forming part of their congregations, or 286,672 adult persons brought regularly under Methodist teaching and influence,—no unimportant part of the population of the country. The precise proportion cannot be ascertained, as there was no accurate census taken until 1801. About the close of the period of which we now speak, however, we have more accurate *data*, and then find in the British Islands, (omitting Ireland,) 181,706 members, or 726,824 persons under the teaching of Methodist preachers, which gives about one to every nine adults in the land. That this number of persons, brought under such instruction and influence, must have had a salutary effect on the religion and morals of the country, seems to be self-evident.

The fact is, indeed, indisputable. Let Yorkshire and Lancashire bear their testimony. Ask the persons best acquainted with the past and present state of the miners of Staffordshire and Cornwall, what has been the influence of Methodism on the population of these counties. We intend no flattering compliment to their condition in 1815; but we are bold in saying they were then morally regenerated, when compared with what they were before Methodism approached them. We have distinctly heard the rector of one of the most populous parishes in the latter

county declare, that, but for the influence of Methodism, he could not have lived in his rectory-house.

Methodist loyalty.

The loyalty of the Methodist body has never been impeached. They have uniformly endeavoured to show themselves zealous supporters of the throne, and to render willing and ample obedience to the law. The influence of their Missions, by enabling the colonial governments to intrust the Methodist Negro slaves with arms, saved more than one of the West India Islands in the war with France. Methodist loyalty, in all human probability, preserved Dublin from being sacked in the Irish rebellion. No danger was apprehended in the Irish capital, when, one evening, a person living in the country called, in a state of great excitement, on his brother who resided in the city, and implored him, in the most earnest manner, to leave the town with his family that night. He would give no reason for the urgent request, and the person addressed refused to comply. They parted in tears. The person thus urged to leave Dublin was a Methodist, and, impressed with the strange circumstance, mentioned the fact, so that it was communicated to the lord lieutenant. This circumstance, connected with others which in themselves did not seem significant, instantly alarmed the authorities. The castle guns were fired; the drums beat to arms; the troops were marshalled, and, before daybreak, marched out of the city, when they met the rebel army about three miles from the town; and, after a bloody conflict, completely defeated it, and saved the capital. This, it is true, was but a single act of individual duty; but it is in perfect accordance with the character of the body, and the entire course of its teaching and influence.

Special instances in the West Indies and Ireland.

Methodism not opposed to liberty.

But it is alleged that the spirit and tendency of Methodism are opposed to the progress of rational liberty. On

this point we are prepared to speak with perfect freedom. All persons, and all public institutions, have to shape their actions and general course of conduct according to the circumstances in which they are placed, and the influences which they feel called on to promote or to resist. Now it happened that, during the period now under consideration, the evils which threatened the peace and safety of society arose from the prevalence of extreme democratic and revolutionary principles, analogous to those which had deluged France with blood, and plunged in one common ruin the throne, the nobility, and the church. We do not regard it as any discredit to Methodism, that, without leaving its high functions as a religious institution, it discouraged and, in some measure, effectually checked the progress of such sentiments. But it did this, not by political agitation, but through the means of a manifestation of scriptural truth, and the exhibition of sterling patriotism and loyalty.

Leaving individual members to form their own opinions, and to follow their own courses on minor points, the political principles of Methodism are contained in the brief precept, "FEAR GOD, HONOUR THE KING."

Nor friendly to a ruling democracy in church or state.

If, however, by "rational liberty" is meant, as we fear is too often the case, a desire for the people to wrest from the hands of the ruling authorities every portion of power and influence which they can possibly secure, then we freely admit that the religious principles of Methodism are opposed to such a course of action. Then Methodism would resist the popular clamour by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's;" "Render unto all their dues." Methodism feels bound by religious obligation to pay a willing homage to the

throne as an ordinance of God; and fully recognises the scriptural authority of the Christian ministry. Both in church and state, therefore, the religious principles (not merely the political opinions) of Methodism are opposed to a ruling democracy. Whatever opinions individual members of the body may form,—and they are by no rules of the Connexion withheld from entertaining those which they prefer,—the body, as a whole, is thoroughly constitutional.

Benevolent and philanthropic exertions.

But the enunciation of abstract principles on such subjects does not produce extensive conviction. Let us then look at the conduct and bearing of Methodism during this period. In respect of its own disciplinary arrangements, every change made in the legislation of Methodism was a concession to popular opinion; but a concession so guarded from abuse, as to preserve intact the essential principles bequeathed by Wesley. The persevering efforts of the leading Methodists of the day for the suppression of the infamous Slave Trade, until that iniquitous traffic was abolished by law; and the still more laborious and self-denying exertions for the amelioration of the condition of the slaves in the British colonies, by sending them the Gospel in the hands of Methodist missionaries,—are too well known to need amplification. The Methodists, also, as the preceding pages show, took a leading part in the defeat of Lord Sidmouth's infamous Bill, which would have deprived Englishmen of the liberty of freely worshipping God. They were equally prominent in securing the passing of the important statute by which that religious freedom is fully guaranteed to the subjects of the British crown. Indeed, the Methodist, in so far as he differs from any other mere citizens of the state, is bound by higher and holier obligations than they to love his country, serve his

sovereign, and do his best to promote the universal well-being of mankind.

The earnest Protestantism of Methodism.

Before dismissing the relation of Methodism to the nation, there is one other point to which it is proper that attention should be directed. There has never been a period, since the great Reformation, when England has been perfectly free from danger through Popish influence. We, in common with all evangelical Christians, feel that this is the case now. Nor is it possible to mention a point to which all the national and religious interests converge as they do to this. The Protestantism of Britain is the cause of her might, the secret of her greatness, the grand motive power which, penetrating all her institutions, gives vitality, energy, and irresistible potency to them all. How then does Methodism stand in respect of this palladium of Britain's weal? What aspect does she wear toward its Popish aggressors?

Methodism the greatest defence against Popery.

The answer is simply that she stands alone in the purity and energy of her Protestant character, and in the force of her opposition to every encroachment. In making this statement we are not ignorant of the praiseworthy exertions of the Established Church and of Protestant Dissenters in support of the Protestantism of our country. Nor are we disposed to underrate their value. We nevertheless fully maintain the statement we have made. Although we doubt not that the Church of England numbers a multitude of sons who would rather follow Ridley and Latimer to the stake than wear the mark of the beast; yet we cannot conceal from ourselves the fact: The lamented defect in the Reformation noticed in a previous volume,* has left in the body of the Church a *stand-point* on which Popish influence may find a resting-place, and Popish energy a fulcrum for action.

* See vol. i., p. 42.

There are things common to Popery and the National Establishment which threaten the Protestant character of the latter, weaken the hands of her truly Protestant members, and misguide many of her earnest sons back to the Popish darkness from which their fathers by many a sacrifice of blood emerged.

Nor have all the Dissenting bodies kept themselves in such a state of antagonism to Popish influence and action as could be desired. The hostile attitude in which they stand toward the National Church has induced no little sympathy between some of them and Roman Catholics, who hold an equally belligerent position toward the Establishment. This sympathy has been increased by the professions of religious liberty which it suits the present circumstances of the Catholics to make. We have accordingly seen men whose ancestors perished under the Popish intolerance of the Stuarts, exerting themselves to the utmost to place political power in the hands of the Papists of the present day. Methodism, being free alike from the antique remnants of superstition,—which are regarded as obsolete by Protestant churchmen, but unfortunately enable those who are otherwise minded to do mischief,—and also from any hostile feeling towards the Church, which might lead its members to support the claims of her Catholic enemies,—stands in a purely Protestant position. Friendly to the Church in her Protestant character; friendly also to every form of evangelical Dissent, regarded as an instrument of diffusing the light and power of the Gospel; esteeming all for Christ's sake; Methodism, nevertheless, rears the wide extent of her connexional energy and influence as a barrier against the aggressions of Antichrist; and as such we believe its national importance to be unrivalled, and regard it as adapted by the providence

of God to contribute materially to preserve this land in the faith of Christ.

Conclusion.

We close our review of this period of Methodist history. It reveals the progress of a religious people through twenty-five years of faithful toil and Christian warfare. The struggles which followed the death of Wesley, although marked by much that is to be regretted, issued in the establishment of a polity which carried the body successfully through this period of its history. For, although harassed by much opposition, and opposed by great obstacles, it went on aggregating numbers and influence, until, at the close of the period, it stood before the world as one of the great evangelizing institutions of the country.

APPENDIX.

A, page 18.—*To the Members of our Societies, who desire to receive the Lord's Supper from the hands of their own Preachers.*

VERY DEAR BRETHREN,

THE Conference desire us to write to you, in their name, in the most tender and affectionate manner, and to inform you of the event of their deliberations concerning the administration of the Lord's Supper.

After debating the subject time after time, we were greatly divided in sentiment. In short, we knew not what to do, that peace and union might be preserved. At last one of the senior brethren (Mr. Pawson) proposed that we should commit the matter to God by putting the question to the lot, considering that the Oracles of God declare, that "the Lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty:" * And again, that "the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord:" † And considering also that we have the example of the Apostles themselves, in a matter, which we thought, all things considered, of less importance.

We accordingly prepared the Lots; and four of us prayed. God was surely then present, yea, His glory filled the room. Almost all the preachers were in tears; and, as they afterwards confessed, felt an undoubted assurance that God Himself would decide. Mr. Adam Clarke was then called on to draw the Lot, which was, "You shall not administer the sacrament the ensuing year." All were satisfied. All submitted. All was peace. Every countenance seemed to testify that every heart said, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." A minute was then formed according to the previous explanation of the Lots, that the sacrament should not be administered in our Connexion, for the ensuing year, except in London. The prohibition reaches the clergy of the Church of England as well as the other brethren.

We do assure you, dear brethren, we should have been perfectly resigned, if the Lot had fallen on the other side. Yea, we should, as far as Christian prudence and expediency would have justified, have encouraged the administration of the Lord's Supper by the preachers; because we had not a doubt but God was uncommonly present on the occasion, and did Himself decide.

Signed, in behalf of the Conference,

ALEXANDER MATHER, President.
THOMAS COKE, Secretary.

B, page 23.—*An Address to the Members of the Methodist Societies throughout England, from the Conference assembled at Leeds, August 6th,* 1793.

DEAR BRETHREN,

WE feel it our duty to send you this Address, lest the insinuations of any, who are enemies to our prosperity and unity, should grieve your minds, and injure the work of God.

Our venerable father, who is gone to his great reward, lived and died a member and friend of the Church of England. His attachment to it was so strong and so unshaken, that nothing but irresistible necessity induced him to deviate from it in any degree. In many instances God Himself obliged him to do this. He powerfully called him forth into the streets and open fields, and afterwards raised to his assistance hundreds of men who never passed through the usual forms of ordination. To all these evident providences of God Mr. Wesley submitted, though at first with great reluctance. In consequence he found himself obliged to erect chapels, which were neither consecrated according to the usual method of the Church of England, nor in the least subject to the direction of the national episcopacy. In all these things he deviated from the Establishment, merely on the ground of unavoidable necessity; or, which is the same to a truly pious soul, from the clear manifested providence and will of God.

* Prov. xviii. 18. † Prov. xvi. 33.

A dilemma, or difficulty, of a similar kind has been experienced by us since the death of Mr. Wesley. A few of our Societies have repeatedly importuned us to grant them the liberty of receiving the Lord's Supper from their own preachers. But, desirous of adhering most strictly to the plan which Mr. Wesley laid down, we again and again denied their request. The subject, however, is now come to its crisis. We find that we have no alternative, but to comply with their requisition, or entirely to lose them! O brethren, we "hate putting away!" especially those who are members of the mystical body of Christ, and our dearly beloved brethren; and whose only error, where they do err, is that of the judgment, and not of the heart. And can we suffer these to forsake their faithful pastors, and possibly to run into the jaws of some ravening wolf, when the point in contest must be allowed by all to be *unessential* to salvation?

But we are not insensible that our brethren on the other side may justly urge, "Are not our interests as dear to you as theirs? Why then will you grieve us in so tender a point? Why will you oppose us in those particulars, which we think of very great importance to the prosperity of Zion? Why will you force upon us a term of communion to which we never consented, or expect us to remain united to those who will be ever grieving us, by pressing the necessity of compliance with *that*, which we judge to be highly injurious to the cause of God?"

Such is the dilemma, dear brethren, to which we have been reduced. We allow the full force of the arguments which the brethren who disapprove of the administration of the Lord's Supper, urge as above: nor can we, on any consideration, lay on them a new term of communion, or suffer a *single person* among them to be grieved by the reasonings of those who wish for an innovation in our plan. We therefore weighed this delicate subject with the greatest seriousness and deliberation, feeling the tenderest pity for those of our brethren who thought themselves aggrieved; and came finally to the following resolution: "That the sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered by the preachers in any part of our Connexion, except where the whole Society is unanimous for it, and *will not be contented without it;* and, even in those few exempt Societies, it shall be administered, as far as practicable, in the evening only, and according to the form of the Church of England. For we could not bear that the sacrament, which was instituted by our Lord as a bond of peace and union, should become a bone of contention; and are determined never to sanction the administration of that holy ordinance, for the purpose of strife and division.

You may clearly see from hence, dear brethren, that it is *the people*, in the instances referred to, who have forced us into this further deviation from our union to the Church of England. Still we wish to be united to it as a body at large. The few Societies which answer the description mentioned in the above resolution, need but have a small influence on the whole Connexion. We cannot, however, we will not part with any of our dear flock, who love God and man, on account of unessential points. For we love you *all*, and are the servants of you all for Jesu's sake. But we entreat our Societies at large (the few exempt cases excepted) to continue, as usual, in connexion with the Church of England; and we shall, with great cheerfulness and contentment, labour among them according to that simple original plan of Methodism, established and left to us by our venerable friend.

We must observe to you in conclusion, that we feel the most unfeigned loyalty to the king, and a sincere attachment to the constitution. We reverence the government; are conscious of the many blessings we enjoy under our gracious sovereign, and are thankful to God for them; and do earnestly and sincerely recommend the same principles and spirit to you.

We remain, dear Brethren,
Your most affectionate Servants and faithful Pastors.

C, page 26.—*Letter of the Bristol Trustees' Attorney to Mr. Henry Moore.*

BRISTOL, *August* 11*th*, 1794.

MR. HENRY MOORE,

WE, the undersigned, trustees for the Methodist preaching-house, called the "New Room," in the Horse-Fair, and also for Guinea Street chapel, do give you this notice, that you are not appointed by us to preach or expound God's holy word in either of those places,

and that no other person or persons have or hath any legal right to make that appointment but only we the trustees: we therefore forbid and caution you against attempting trespassing upon the above trust-premises, as you will answer it at your peril.

HENRY DURBIN,	WILLIAM GREEN,
DANIEL LANE,	EDWARD STOCK,
WILLIAM PINE,	THOMAS ROBERTS,
DANIEL WAIT, JUN.,	NATHANIEL GIFFORD,
JOHN CURTIS.	

Witness, JAMES HUGHES, Attorney.

D, page 30.—*Plan of Pacification.*

I. CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER, BAPTISM, &c.

1. THE Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered in any chapel, except the majority of the trustees of that chapel on the one hand, and the majority of the stewards and leaders belonging to that chapel (as the best qualified to give the sense of the people) on the other hand, allow of it. Nevertheless, in all cases, the consent of the Conference shall be obtained, before the Lord's Supper be administered.

2. Wherever there is a Society, but no chapel, if the majority of the stewards and leaders of that Society testify, that it is the wish of the people that the Lord's Supper should be administered to them, their desire shall be gratified: provided, that the consent of the Conference be previously obtained.

3. Provided nevertheless, that in Mount Pleasant chapel in Liverpool, and in all other chapels where the Lord's Supper has been already peaceably administered, the administration of it shall be continued in future.

4. The administration of baptism, the burial of the dead, and service in Church-hours, shall be determined according to the regulations above-mentioned.

5. Wherever the Lord's Supper shall be administered according to the before-mentioned regulations, it shall always be continued, except the Conference order the contrary.

6. The Lord's Supper shall be administered by those *only* who are authorized by the Conference; and at such times, and in such manner *only*, as the Conference shall appoint.

7. The administration of baptism, and the Lord's Supper, according to the above regulations, is intended only for the members of our own Society.

8. We agree that the Lord's Supper be administered among us on Sunday evenings only: except where the majority of the stewards and leaders desire it in Church-hours; or where it has already been administered in those hours. Nevertheless, it shall never be administered on those Sundays on which it is administered in the parochial church.

9. The Lord's Supper shall be always administered in England according to the form of the Established Church: but the person who administers shall have full liberty to give out hymns, and to use exhortation and extemporary prayer.

10. Wherever Divine service is performed in England on the Lord's day in Church-hours, the officiating preacher shall read either the service of the Established Church, our venerable father's abridgement, or, at least, the lessons appointed by the Calendar. But we recommend either the full service, or the abridgement.

E, page 86.—*Halifax Circular.*

To the METHODIST-PREACHERS in general, and to the *Conference* and *Assistants*, in particular.

DEAR BRETHREN,

WE whose Names are underwritten, having seriously weighed the present State of our Affairs, beg leave to lay before you the result of our Deliberations.

Ought not the Preachers in each Circuit to consult with their neighbouring Brethren, and appoint who shall attend the ensuing Conference? For, would it be prudent for *all* to go? as the Circuits would then be left for a considerable time without Preachers: and it will be impossible to find accommodations for *all* among our own friends in Manchester. Yet, ought not as many of the Members of the Conference as possible, with the Assistants, and

Preachers who are to be admitted, to attend? Likewise to take into Consideration our Form or Mode of Government for the future; that you may not have *all* to do, when you meet at Manchester.

There appear to us but two ways: either to appoint another King in Israel; or to be governed by the Conference Plan, by forming ourselves into Committees. If you adopt the first, who is the Man? What Power is he to be invested with? and what Revenue is he to be allowed?—But *this is incompatible* with the *Conference Deed.* If the latter, we take the Liberty to offer our Thoughts upon that Subject.

1. Fill up the vacant Places in the Conference Deed with Preachers, according to their *Seniority in the Work.*

2. Chuse a President for *one Year only,* according to the enrolled Deed.

3. Appoint a Secretary and Stewards for *one Year only,* except for the Preachers' Fund.

4. Appoint a Person from Year to Year to hold a Conference in Ireland.

5. Appoint different Committees, which will take in all the Circuits in the three Kingdoms, to manage the Affairs of their respective Districts, from one Conference to another.

6. Let these Committees, during the time of Conference, appoint their own Presidents for the *ensuing Year.* And let their Names be inserted in the Minutes, that they may convene the Committee in Case of the bad behaviour or Death of a Preacher, or any other emergency.

7. Let each of the Presidents bring an account of their Proceedings to the Conference, and *there* let them be *finally determined.*

8. Let every Preacher that is recommended at the Conference, and approved of, but not *then* wanted, have his Name inserted at the end of the Minutes, that the aforesaid Presidents, or Committees, may know where to apply for a Preacher, when one is wanted in any of their respective Dictricts.

9. In Case the Number of these Preachers be not sufficient to supply the vacancies that happen between Conference and Conference, let the Committee agree with a Local Preacher to supply till the *next Conference only.*

10. If the Number of Clergymen who do not travel, Superannuated and Supernumerary Preachers, be not limited, may not our Government, in process of Time, fall into the Hands of Men who cannot, properly, be called Travelling Preachers!!!

11. Should it be necessary to *settle any more Clergymen,* or to make more Supernumerary Preachers than a *given Number,* will it not be wise to put out of the Deed the *first Clergyman,* or *Supernumerary Preacher,* and put a Travelling Preacher in his Place? George Whitfield, or the Book Steward, for the time being, excepted.

N.B.—Read the Conference Deed, and you will be convinced that *no Person has a right, by that Deed,* to go to *Ireland,* or *elsewhere,* to *hold a Conference:* and, had not our last Conference appointed our ensuing Meeting at *Manchester,* by *that Deed,* we must have gone to *London, Bristol,* or *Leeds.*

We submit these Thoughts to your Consideration, and earnestly Pray to GOD that you may have Wisdom to improve, amend, or reject them, as shall be most for His Glory, and the CONTINUATION of ITINERANCY AMONG the METHODISTS!

We are,
Dear BRETHREN,
Your Affectionate BRETHREN,

WILLIAM THOMPSON.
JOHN PAWSON.
ROBERT ROBERTS.
JOHN ALLEN.
RICHARD RODDA.
SAMUEL BRADBURN.
THOMAS TENNANT.
THOMAS HANBY.
CHRISTOPHER HOPPER.

HALIFAX,
30th of March, 1791.

Just Published, An Account of the Character of Mr. WESLEY, by Messrs. RODDA and BRADBURN.——Price 6d.

F, page 87.—*Meeting of Laymen at Redruth.*

AT A MEETING OF THE DELEGATES, AND OTHERS,
FROM THE *METHODIST SOCIETIES,*
IN THE COUNTY OF CORNWALL,
HELD AT REDRUTH, JUNE 14th, 1791,
IT WAS AGREED,
THAT AN AMENDMENT OF OUR DISCIPLINE IS NECESSARY.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE,

1 THAT, in the forming of Classes, the Members constituting every Class (or a Majority of them) shall chuse their Leader.

2 THAT the People in every Society (or a Majority of them) shall choose the Society Stewards.

3 THAT no Preacher shall admit into, or expel from, the Society any Member, without the Consent of a Majority of such Society.

4 THAT the Stewards assembled at Quarter Meeting shall choose the Circuit Stewards.

5 THAT there shall be no Division of Circuits, without Consent of a Majority of the Stewards at Quarter Meeting.

6 THAT no Person be recommended to Conference (or sent out) as a Travelling Preacher without a Certificate from the Stewards assembled at Quarter Meeting.

7 THAT if any Preacher be charged with not walking worthy of his Vocation, or with being deficient in Abilities, the Circuit Stewards (on Complaint to them made) shall convene the Stewards of the several Societies in their Circuit, who, from among themselves, shall choose an equal Number with the Preachers present, to judge of the Charge or Charges that shall be produced; and, according to the Decision of the Majority, such Preacher shall be continued in, or expelled the Circuit.

8 THAT WE will on all Occasions support the Itinerant Plan, and chearfully contribute our Proportion of the Expence.

WE PROPOSE

THAT every Preacher coming from a distant Circuit, shall bring a Certificate of his Good Conduct (while in that Circuit) from a Majority of the Stewards assembled at Quarter Meeting.

THAT, for the Advantage of the Connection in general, the Preachers (who are not included in the Conference Deed) be admitted to an equal Share of the Government, and have a Vote in all Cases; the affairs of Preaching Houses only excepted.

WE highly disapprove of the Proposal for dividing the Kingdom into Districts, conceiving it would be injurious to Methodism.

RESOLVED,

THAT a Copy of these Resolutions, Proposals, &c., be transmitted to every Traveling Preacher in the Kingdom. Wishing you Peace, Amity, and Harmony at the ensuing Conference: Our Prayer is that Prosperity may attend the Cause in which you are embarked. We subscribe ourselves your affectionate Brethren,

Richard Cornish	Edward Roberts	John Budge	Richard Andrew
John Vivian	Richard Trevithick	William Boase	Nicholas Rodda
William Anthony	Richard Penrose	Samuel Phillips	Sampson Hosking
William Carne	Francis Hall	Henry Gundry	Richard Williams
Charles Richards	Stephen Harvey	Samuel Laue	James Bennetts
Tristram Powning	William Hoskings	Richard Libby	John Martyn
Mark Rowe	George Michell	Solomon Burrall	Emanual Pope
Charles Slade	William Jeffree	Benedict Carvoso	Henry Trevenen
Alexander Dingle	Edward Lovey	Benjamen Moon (*sic*)	John Collatt
William Carvoso	Henry Pearce	James Thomas	William Condy
James Sems	Joseph Carne	James Mathews	Henry James
John Thomas	Peter Hammill	William Michell	Paul Penrose.
Philip Bray	Joseph Andrew	Thomas Gundry	

G, page 102.—*Minutes of a Meeting held at Lichfield, April 2nd,* 1794.

We will make no avowed separation from the Church of England.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be administered wherever there is a majority of the Society who desire it; but the preachers must not canvass for votes, or do anything to obtain a majority which may lead to division or strife; nor should the Lord's Supper be administered in any chapel when a majority of the trustees are against it, except a fair and full indemnification be afforded them for all the debts which they were responsible for, supposing they require such indemnity.

That there be an order of superintendents appointed by the Conference.

That all the preachers who shall be approved by the Conference shall from time to time be ordained as elders.

That all the preachers, when admitted into full Connexion, shall receive their admission by being ordained deacons by the superintendents appointed by the Conference: provided, 1. That no preacher at present on probation, or in full Connexion, shall be under any obligation to submit to ordination. 2. That no preacher shall receive letters of orders till he has been ordained an elder.

That the superintendents appointed among us, by the Conference, shall be annually changed, if necessary.

That the Connexion be formed into seven or eight general divisions.

That each superintendent shall visit the principal Societies in his division, at least once a year; that he shall have authority to execute, or see executed, all the branches of Methodist discipline, and to determine, after having consulted the preachers who are with him, in all cases of difficulty, till the Conference.

That the superintendent of any division, where he judge himself inadequate to determine in any given case, shall have authority to call in the president to his assistance; in which case the president shall, if possible, attend, and shall have the ultimate determination of the case until the Conference.

The divisions for the present:—

1. London, Sussex, Rochester, Canterbury, Godalming, Norwich, Yarmouth, Diss, St. Ives, Bury, Colchester, Lynn, Walsingham, Bedford, Higham Ferrers.

2. Bristol, Bath, Portsmouth, Sarum, Norman Isles, Bradford, Wilts, Gloucester, Shepton Mallett, Taunton, Collumpton, Plymouth, St. Austle, Redruth, Penzance.

3. Birmingham, Oxford, Worcester, Pembroke, Glamorgan, Brecon, Wolverhampton, Shrewsbury, Burslem, Hinckley.

4. Manchester, Macclesfield, Leek, Stockport, Oldham, Bolton, Wigan, Chester, Liverpool, Northwich, Blackburn, Colne.

5. Sheffield, Nottingham, Northampton, Banbury, Castle Donnington, Newark, Derby, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Grimsby, Horncastle, Gainsborough, Epworth, Rotherham.

6. Leeds, Wakefield, Huddersfield, Birstal, Dewsbury, Bradford, Halifax, Keighley, Otley, York, Thirsk, Bridlington.

7. Newcastle, Sunderland, Alnwick, Hexham, Barnard Castle, Whitehaven, Whitby, Stockton, Scarbro', Isle of Man.

8. Scotland and Ireland.

Proposed superintendents,

Dr. Coke, Dr. Mather, Dr. Pawson, Dr. Taylor, Dr. Moore, Mr. Hanby, Mr. Bradburn.

Present: T. Coke, A. Mather, T. Taylor, J. Pawson, S. Bradburn, J. Rogers, H. Moore, A. Clarke.

The whole of the above plan to be laid before the ensuing Conference, to be adopted or rejected, as they may think fit; but those present agree to recommend and support it as a thing greatly wanted, and likely to be of much advantage to the work of God.

H, page 104.—*To the Members of the Methodist Societies throughout England.*

Bristol, *Aug. 8th,* 1794.

Dear Brethren,

We have again taken into our mature consideration the state of our Societies in this kingdom, respecting the administration of the sacrament, and some other particulars, which

have engaged the attention of many of our people; and, for the sake of peace and love, have come to the following resolutions:—

1st. All ecclesiastical titles, such as *Reverend*, &c., shall be laid aside, as also gowns, bands, &c., agreeably to the resolutions of the Conference held at Leeds in 1793.

2dly. Preaching in Church-hours shall not be permitted, except for special reasons, and where it will not cause a division.

3dly. As the Lord's Supper has not been administered, except where the Society has been unanimous for it, and would not have been contented without it, it is now agreed that the Lord's Supper shall not be administered in future, where the union and concord of the Society can be preserved without it.

4thly. The preachers will not perform the office of baptism, except for the desirable ends of love and concord; though Baptism, as well as the burial of the dead, was performed by many of the preachers, long before the death of Mr. Wesley, and with his consent.

5thly. It is agreed, that the management of the temporal and spiritual concerns of the Society shall be separated, as far as the purposes of peace and harmony can be answered thereby; or as they have ever been separated in times of the greatest peace and harmony, viz., 1. The temporal concerns shall be managed by the stewards chosen for that purpose, who shall keep books, wherein all monies collected, received, or disbursed on account of their respective Societies, shall be entered. 2. The spiritual concerns shall be managed by the preachers, who have *ever* appointed leaders, chosen stewards, and admitted members into, and expelled them from, the Society, consulting their brethren, the stewards and leaders. The preachers also, as hitherto, are to appoint lovefeasts and watch-nights, and to vary the times and places of preaching, Class-meeting, &c., &c.

6thly. That the trustees may have the fullest assurance that the Conference love them, and have not the shadow of a desire to oppress them, any more than to reject any proposals which they conceive calculated to restore and preserve peace and harmony, the following articles are added:—

1st. The trustees, in conjunction with the assistant preacher, who shall have one vote only, shall choose their own stewards, who shall receive and disburse all seat-rents, and such collections as shall be made for the purpose of paying interest for money due upon the premises, or for reducing the principal: of all which monies so received or disbursed, the aforesaid stewards shall keep proper accounts in books provided for that purpose; which books shall be open for the inspection of the assistant, and audited in his presence once every year, or oftener, if convenient. Provided always, that when the necessities of the work of God require it, the trustees shall allow quarterly what may appear requisite for carrying on the work, so that it be not cramped. Provided, that if the seat-rents and collections fall short of what will be sufficient to discharge the rents, interest of money, and other necessary expenses of the chapels, the deficiency shall be made good out of some other revenue of the Society: and that books shall be provided, wherein shall be inserted all the accounts both of the trustees, and of the stewards of the respective Societies, which shall be open for the inspection of the trustees and others, and that the said accounts shall be annually audited in the presence of the trustees. Provided also, that nothing in these resolutions shall be construed to extend to alter any of the powers contained in the trust-deeds.

2dly. No trustee (however accused, or defective in conforming to the established rules of the Society) shall be removed from the Society, unless his crime or breach of the rules of the Society be proved in the presence of the trustees and leaders.

3dly. If any preacher be accused of immorality, a meeting shall be called of all the preachers, trustees, stewards, and leaders of the Circuit in which the accused preacher labours; and if the charge be proved to the satisfaction of the majority of such meeting, the chairman of the District in which that Circuit is situated shall remove the convicted preacher from the Circuit on the request of the majority of the meeting: nevertheless, an appeal on either side to the Conference shall remain.

Signed, in behalf of the Conference,

THOMAS HANBY, President.
THOMAS COKE, Secretary.

I, page 126.—*Disciplinary Part of the Plan of Pacification.*

II. Concerning Discipline.

1. The appointment of preachers shall remain solely with the Conference; and no trustee, or number of trustees, shall expel or exclude from their chapel or chapels, any preachers so appointed.

2. Nevertheless, if the majority of the trustees, or the majority of the stewards and leaders of any Society, believe that any preacher appointed for their Circuit is immoral, erroneous in doctrines, deficient in abilities, or that he has broken any of the rules above-mentioned, they shall have authority to summon the preachers of the District, and all the trustees, stewards, and leaders of the Circuit, to meet in their chapel on a day and hour appointed, (sufficient time being given.) The chairman of the District shall be president of the assembly; and every preacher, trustee, steward, and leader shall have a single vote, the chairman possessing also the casting voice. And if the majority of the meeting judge that the accused preacher is immoral, erroneous in doctrines, deficient in abilities, or has broken any of the rules above-mentioned, he shall be considered as removed from that Circuit: and the District Committee shall, as soon as possible, appoint another preacher for that Circuit, instead of the preacher so removed: and shall determine among themselves how the removed preacher shall be disposed of till the Conference, and shall have authority to suspend the said preacher from all public duties, till the Conference, if they judge proper. The Dictrict Committee shall also supply, as well as possible, the place of the removed preacher, till another preacher be appointed. And the preacher thus appointed, and all other preachers, shall be subject to the above mode of trial. And if the District Committee do not appoint a preacher for that Circuit, instead of the removed preacher, within a month after the aforesaid removal, or do not fill up the place of the removed preacher till another preacher be appointed, the majority of the said trustees, stewards, and leaders, being again regularly summoned, shall appoint a preacher for the said Circuit, provided he be a member of the Methodist Connexion, till the ensuing Conference.

3. If any preacher refuse to submit to the above mode of trial, in any of the cases mentioned above, he shall be considered as suspended till the Conference. And if any trustees expel from any chapel a preacher by their own *separate* authority, the preachers appointed for that Circuit shall not preach in that chapel till the ensuing Conference, or till a trial take place, according to the mode mentioned above.

4. If any trustees expel or exclude a preacher, by their own *separate* authority, from any chapel in any Circuit, the chairman of the District shall summon the members of the District Committee, the trustees of that Circuit who have not offended, and the stewards and leaders of the Circuit. And the members of such assembly shall examine into the evidence on both sides; and if the majority of them determine, that the state of the Society in which the exclusion took place, requires that a new chapel should be built previous to the meeting of the Conference, every proper step shall be immediately taken for erecting such chapel. And no step shall on any account be taken to erect a chapel for *such purpose* before the meeting of the Conference, till such meeting be summoned, and such determination be made.

5. No preacher shall be suspended or removed from his Circuit by any District Committee, except he have the privilege of the trial before-mentioned.

6. The hundred preachers mentioned in the enrolled deed, and their successors, are the only *legal* persons who constitute the Conference; and we think the junior brethren have no reason to object to this proposition, as they are regularly elected according to seniority.

7. Inasmuch as in drawing up the preceding regulations, we have laboured to restore and preserve the peace and unity of the Society, and, in order thereto, have endeavoured to keep the preachers out of all disputes on the subjects therein specified:—be it understood, that any preacher who shall disturb the peace of the Society by speaking for or against the introduction of the Lord's Supper in our Societies, or concerning the old or new plan, so called, shall be subject to the trial and penalties before mentioned.

8. And in order that the utmost impartiality may be manifest in these regulations, for the peace of the whole body, we also resolve, that if any local preacher, trustee, steward, or leader, shall disturb the peace of the Society by speaking for or against the introduction of the Lord's Supper, or concerning the old or new plan, so called, the superintendent of the

Circuit, or the majority of the trustees, stewards, and leaders of the Society so disturbed, shall have authority to summon a meeting of the travelling preachers of the Circuit, and the trustees, stewards, and leaders of that Society. Evidence shall be examined on both sides; and, if the charge be proved, the superintendent preacher shall expel from the Society the person so offending.

J, page 132.—*List of Trustees' Delegates.*

At this and subsequent meetings, the following delegates were admitted, viz.—

FROM

1. *Ashton-under-Line,* James Harrop.
2. *Armley,* John Wild.
3. *Bramley,* William Field.
4. *Bulwell,* Charles Sutton.
5, 6. *Bradford,* John Butler and John Schofield.
7. *Borslem,* William Smith.
8, 9. *Birstall,* Thomas Crowther and John Armitage.
10. *Brighouse,* James Mitchell.
11. *Barnsley,* John Pollitt.
12. *Bolton,* John Fletcher.
13. *Burlington and Burlington Key,* Tho. Robinson.
14, 15. *Chapel-Town,* Abr. Dickenson and W. Naylor.
16. *Chester,* George Walker.
17. *Cawood,* Joseph Vickers.
18. *Darlington,* Matthew Naylor.
19. *Epworth,* Robert Holme.
20, 21. *Easingwould,* T. Dodgson and R. Wilkinson.
22. *Greatland,* John Iredale.
23. *Hexham,* Michael Longridge.
24. *Howden,* John Barker.
25. *Horsforth,* William Field.
26, 27. *Hull,* Thomas Thompson and John Harrop.
28. *Huddersfield,* John North.
29, 30. *Herfield,* William Leno and Siddal Beard.
31. *Harewood,* Samuel Popplewell.
32. *Hunslet,* George Beaumont.
33, 34, 35. *Keighley,* John Whitaker, John Morson, and Marmaduke Knowles.
36. *Killinghall,* John Oliver.
37. *Knaresborough,* John Shutt.
38. *London,* Thomas Day.
39, 40. *Leeds,* William Hardon and John Dobson.
41. *Liverpool,* Joseph Farrer.
42. *Linley,* Francis Vickerman.
43, 44. *Manchester,* Matth. Mayer and Jo. Fletcher.
45, 46. *Mossley,* John Howard and Richard Wilson.
47. *Nottingham,* Robert Hall.
48. *Newcastle-upon-Tyne,* Robert Frost.
49. *Nesson,* George Lowe.
50. *Ossett,* John Phillip.
51, 52. *Pocklington,* W. Rogerson and B. Clarkson.
53. *Pudsey,* George Beecroft.
54. *Ripon,* Thomas Dowson.
55. *Rothwell,* Thomas Wilson.
56. *Redhall,* Joseph Thornley.
57, 58. *Sheffield,* Tho. Woodcroft and B. Woolhouse.
59. *Stockport,* George Garside.

60. *Selby,* William Allen.
61. *Shelley,* Benjamin Fitton.
62. *Thorn,* Thomas Shaw.
63, 64. *Oldham,* Edm. Whitehead and Daniel Lees.
65. *Thong,* Ely Perkin.
66. *Ulleshelf,* Michael Colson.
67. *Witchfield,* John Turner.

THOMAS THOMPSON, of *Hull,* was chosen president, and THOMAS DAY, of *London,* secretary.

K, page 144.—*Address to the Societies, and Miscellaneous Regulations.*

TO THE METHODIST SOCIETIES.

LEEDS, *August 7th,* 1797.

DEAR BRETHREN,

WE think it our duty to inform you, by the earliest opportunity, of the measures we have taken, in order to satisfy those of our brethren, who have been made more or less uneasy, by sundry publications circulated through the Societies; and, we trust, that on a serious consideration of the regulations we have agreed to at this Conference, you will see that the sacrifices in respect to authority, which we have made on the part of the whole body of travelling preachers, evidence our willingness to meet our brethren in everything which is consistent with the existence of the Methodist discipline, and our readiness to be their servants for Jesus's sake.

I. In respect to finances, or money matters:—

1. We have determined to publish annually a very minute account of the disbursement, or application of the Yearly Collection; and,

2. A full account of the affairs of Kingswood School.

3. That all bills for the support of travelling preachers, and their families, in respect to deficiencies, house-rent, fire, candles, sickness, travelling expenses, and all other matters of a temporal kind for their support, for which the Circuits cannot provide, shall first meet with the approbation of the Quarterly Meeting, and be signed by the general steward of the Circuit, before they can be brought to the District Committee.

II. In respect to all other temporal matters:—

1. It has been determined that no Circuits shall be divided, till such division has been approved of by their respective Quarterly Meetings, and signed by the general stewards.

2. That no other temporal matter shall be transacted by the District Committees, till the approbation of the respective Quarterly Meetings be first given, signed by the Circuit stewards.

III. In respect to the receiving and excluding private members of the Society:—

1. The Leaders' Meeting shall have a right to declare any person on trial improper to be received into the Society; and, after such declaration, the superintendent shall not admit such person into the Society.

2. No person shall be expelled from the Society for immorality, till such immorality be proved at a Leaders' Meeting.

IV. In respect to the appointment and removal of leaders, stewards, and local preachers, and concerning meetings:—

1. No person shall be appointed a leader or steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with the Leaders' Meeting: the nomination to be in the superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation in the Leaders' Meeting.

2. The former rule concerning local preachers is confirmed, viz., that no person shall receive a Plan as a local preacher without the approbation of a Local Preachers' Meeting.

3. In compliance with a request made by the committee of persons from various parts, namely, "That the Conference be requested to re-consider and revise those rules which relate to the calling of meetings, and appointing local preachers, made last year;" we say, "No local preacher shall be permitted to preach in any other Circuit than his own, without producing a recommendation from the superintendent of the Circuit in which he lives: nor suffer any invitation to be admitted as a plea, but from men in office, who act in conjunc-

tion with the superintendent of that Circuit which he visits." The design of this rule is to prevent any, under the character of local preachers, from burdening the people, either by collecting money, or by living upon them; and to prevent improper persons, who bear no part of the expense, from inviting local preachers thus to visit them. But it never was intended to reflect the least disrespect on any of our worthy brethren, the local preachers, who, considered as a body, we greatly respect. And it should not be lost sight of, that several of the most respectable local preachers in the kingdom, who were in the committee which met the committee of preachers appointed by the Conference, declared their high approbation of the rule, and desired that it might be strengthened as much as possible, as none could justly complain of it.

4. As the committee above-mentioned requested also that the Minutes of the last Conference concerning the calling of meetings to consider the affairs of the Society or Connexion, be explained: and, as we are exceedingly desirous of preserving the peace and union of the whole body, we have agreed upon the following explanation, viz.:—

(1.) As the Leaders' Meeting is the proper meeting for the Society, and the Quarterly Meeting for the Circuit, we think that other formal meetings, in general, would be contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudical in their consequences; but,

(2.) In order to be as tender as possible, consistently with what we believe to be essential to the welfare of our Societies, we allow that other formal meetings may be held, if they first receive the approbation of the superintendent and the Leaders' or Quarterly Meeting: provided also, that the superintendent, if he please, be present at every such meeting.

V. We have selected all our ancient rules, which were made before the death of our late venerable father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which are essential rules, or prudential at this present time; and have solemnly signed them, declaring our approbation of them, and determination to comply with them; one single preacher excepted,* who, in consequence, withdrew from us.

VI. We have determined, that all the rules which relate to the Societies, leaders, stewards, local preachers, trustees, and Quarterly Meetings, shall be published with the rules of the Society, for the benefit and convenience of all the members.

VII. In respect to all new rules which shall be made by the Conference,

It is determined, that if at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new rule for the Societies at large, and such rule should be objected to, at the first Quarterly Meeting in any given Circuit; and if the major part of that meeting, in conjunction with the preachers, be of opinion that the enforcing of such rule in that Circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit, it shall not be enforced in opposition to the judgment of such Quarterly Meeting, before the second Conference. But, if the rule be confirmed by the second Conference, it shall be binding to the whole Connexion. Nevertheless, the Quarterly Meetings, rejecting a new rule, shall not, by publications, public meetings, or otherwise, make that rule a cause of contention; but shall strive, by every means, to preserve the peace of the Connexion.

Thus, brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our executive government into your hands, as represented in your different public meetings.

(1.) We have delivered the whole of our Yearly Collection to your management. For we know, by experience, that the bills of the Quarterly Meetings, if only *mere* justice be done to the preachers and their families, will amount to much more than the Yearly Collection. The Conference will, in this business, have no authority whatsoever. They will have nothing but the trouble of receiving the money, and paying the bills which shall have been sent to them from the Quarterly Meetings, and been approved of by the District Committees. And when the accounts are published by the Conference, every Quarterly Meeting may compare its own accounts with those of the Conference, and thereby have as complete a check as the nature of things can possibly admit of.

The Conference has reserved to itself the management of its own book concerns. This is most reasonable: as the institution was established for the carrying on of the work of God, under the direction of Mr. Wesley and the Conference, was continued, by the deed or codicil of Mr. Wesley's will, for the use of the Conference, as the whole burden of the management of

* Before the Conference concluded, two other preachers withdrew.

the business lies upon the Conference, and the servants they employ, and on the superintendents of Circuits; and also, as it is the only fund which can supply any deficiencies of the Yearly Collection, as the accounts published in our Minutes for several years past clearly evidence, the Yearly Collection having not been nearly sufficient for the wants of the preachers and families, and for the carrying on of the work of God in general.

(2.) The whole management of our temporal concerns may now be truly said to be invested in the Quarterly Meetings, the District Meetings having nothing left them but a negative.

(3.) Our Societies have a full check on the superintendent, by the means of their Leaders' Meeting, in regard to the introduction of persons into Society; whilst the superintendent has sufficient scope allowed him for the increase of the Societies, not only according to the common course of things, but at the times of remarkable outpourings of the Spirit of God.

(4.) The members of our Societies are delivered from every apprehension of clandestine expulsions; as *that* superintendent would be bold indeed, who would act with partiality or injustice in the presence of the whole meeting of leaders. Such a superintendent, we trust, we have not among us; and if such there ever should be, we should be ready to do all possible justice to our injured brethren.

(5.) There is now no Society officer among us, who can be received without the consent of that meeting to which he particularly belongs; nor can any officer be appointed, except upon the same plan.

(6.) In order to prevent any degree of participation in making new rules, and to obtain information of the sentiments of our people on every such rule, we have agreed to the article mentioned under the 7th head, by which no regulations will be finally confirmed, till after a year's consideration, and the knowledge of the sentiments of the Connexion at large, through the medium of all their public officers.

In short, brethren, out of our great love for peace and union, and our great desire to satisfy your minds, we have given up to you by far the greatest part of the superintendent's authority; and if we consider that the Quarterly Meetings are the sources from whence all temporal regulations, during the intervals of the Conference, must now originally spring; and also, that the Committee, formed according to the Plan of Pacification, can, in every instance, in which the trustees, leaders, and stewards choose to interfere respecting the gifts, doctrines, or moral character of preachers, supersede, in a great measure, the regular District Committees, we may, taking all these things into our view, truly say that such have been the sacrifices we have made, that our District Committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining but a bare negative in general, and the appointment of a representative to assist in drawing up the rough draught of the stations of the preachers. And besides all this, we have given the Quarterly Meetings opportunities of considering every new law, of suspending the execution of it for a year in their respective Circuits, and of sending their sentiments on it to the Conference, before it be finally confirmed.

We have represented these measures which we have taken for your satisfaction, in as concise a manner as we well could, giving you the sense of the whole, not only for brevity's sake, but for expedition, that you may be informed of the general heads of our proceedings as soon as possible. In the regulations which will be published with the rules of the Society, as mentioned above, you will have the whole at large. We are your affectionate brethren,

Signed, in behalf and by order of the Conference,

THOMAS COKE, President.
SAMUEL BRADBURN, Secretary.

SUNDRY MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS.

I. WITH RESPECT TO DISTRICTS.

1. IN order to render our Districts more effective, the president of the Conference shall have power, when applied to, to supply a Circuit with preachers, if any should die or desist from travelling; and to sanction any change of preachers which it may be necessary to make

in the intervals of the Conference. And to assist at any District Meeting, if applied to for that purpose, by the chairman of the District, or by a majority of the superintendents in such District. And he shall have a right, if written to by any who are concerned, to visit any Circuit, and to inquire into their affairs with respect to METHODISM, and, in union with the District Committee, redress any grievance.

2. The chairman of each District, in conjunction with his brethren of the Committee, shall be responsible to the Conference for the execution of the laws, as far as his District is concerned.

3. That no chairman may have cause to complain of the want of power, in cases which (according to his judgment) cannot be settled in the ordinary District Meeting, he shall have authority to summon three of the nearest superintendents, to be incorporated with the District Committee, who shall have equal authority to vote, and settle everything till the Conference.

4. The Conference recommends it to the superintendents of the Circuits, to invite, on all important occasions, the chairman of their respective District, to be present at their Quarterly Meetings.

5. The chairman of every District shall be chosen by the ballot of the Conference, after the names of all the preachers in the District have been read to them by the secretary.

II. As to Delegates.

THE Conference, having maturely considered the subject, are thoroughly persuaded, with many of our Societies, whose letters have been read in full Conference, that they cannot admit any but regular travelling preachers into their body, either in the Conference or District Meetings, and preserve the system of Methodism entire, particularly the itinerant plan, which they are determined to support. But let it be well observed, that, in explaining their Minutes, it was fully and explicitly understood, that if there be any accusation against a preacher, or any difficult affair to settle, not only the Circuit or town Steward, but any leader, or even member of the Society, shall be admitted as evidence to the District Meeting: provided the matter has been first heard at a Quarterly Meeting.

III. With regard to Preachers.

1. BEFORE any superintendent propose a preacher to the Conference, as proper to be admitted on trial, such preacher must not only be approved of at the March Quarterly Meeting, but must have read and signed the General Minutes, as fully approving of them. Nor must any one suppose, or pretend to think, that the conversations which have been on any of these Minutes, were intended so to qualify them, as in the least to affect the spirit and design of them.

2. No local preacher shall keep lovefeasts without the consent of the superintendent, nor in any wise interfere with his business. Let every one keep in his own place, and attend to the duties of his own Station.

END OF VOL. II.

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